NEA Today
The Magazine of the National
NOVEMBER 2000

Helpful Info
from NEA Member Benefits, p. 52

Taming the Paper Tiger

How Jackie Wellborn is cutting special ed paperwork down to size.

see page 8

NEA Today

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COVER STORY

Greg Brown

Taming the Paper Tiger

page 8

Iowa teacher Jackie Wellborn is finding ways to reduce special ed paperwork, while continuing to serve the interests of students, parents, and school staff. She's just one of many NEA members who are refusing to give in to paperwork frustrations.

Cover photo by Greg Brown

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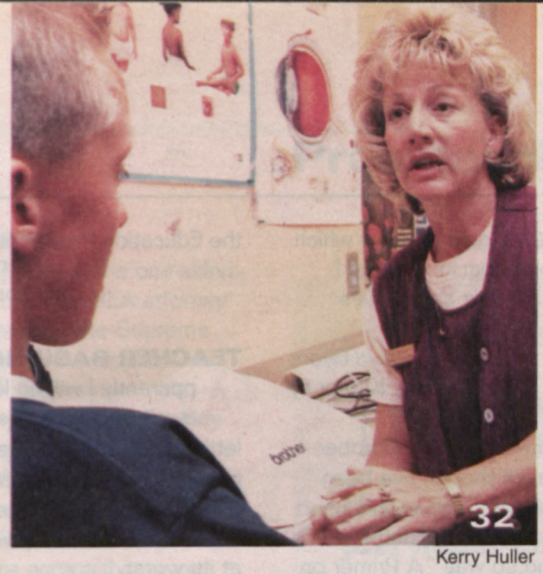

Kerry Huller

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Letters

SCHOOL NURSES

I did not notice any references to school nurses in your recent article on immunizations and immigrants (Health & Fitness, October). It is time NEA supported all members, not just teachers.

I have paid dues for seven and a half years. Because I did not feel represented by my local, I began attending executive board meetings, became involved, and even became a "site rep" to represent the rest of the support personnel in my district.

It is time teachers realize *all* of us in education are here for the kids. This includes secretarial staff, custodial, administration, nurses, other support personnel, and, yes, even the teachers. Education is truly a team effort.

It is time we all realize, as former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders once said, "You cannot educate children who are not healthy, and you cannot keep children healthy who are not educated."

More and more children are entering our school systems with medical conditions. NEA needs to come forward and meet the challenge. School nursing services are critical.

Patty Mancuso, RN, BS, PHN
Redding, California

THE RACE FOR PRESIDENT

Just wanted to let you know that I, as a teacher and NEA member, do not support your choice for president, Al Gore. I was never asked for any input, nor did I receive a survey asking my opinion. I, as well as many others, also pay dues.

Kathy Coppage
Schererville, Indiana

Excellent article on George W. Bush's real record in Texas (Inside Scoop, October).

Al Gore never seems ready to challenge Bush's record when he continues to proclaim himself the "education candidate."

Nancy Bittrich
Seguin, Texas

Regarding your propaganda section on the presidential candidates and education, certainly no one could ever accuse your staff of being unbiased.

I am, however, glad to know which candidate you're backing, since I usually vote for your candidate's opposition.

Evelyn Byers
Lewisburg, Kentucky

I enjoyed *NEA Today* for October as usual, even though I've been retired for five years now. The insert on the Presidential candidates was *wonderful* and so was "A Primer on the Texas Miracle."

I would like to suggest that these be reprinted in local newspapers to get the general public exposed to the best person for the job.

Teachers know these things already. Your explanations would do a lot to help Al Gore be elected as the Education President.

Marylou Freeman
Millbrae, California

TEACHER BASHING

Apparently I will no longer have to await the yearly teacher basher letters from my local newspaper. I can now read them in my organization's magazine. Stephen Richardson's letter (October) was bashing at its worst.

I wonder if the magazines of other unions contain this type of derogatory letters. I think not.

And to think we pay dues for this. NEA, you should be ashamed of yourselves.

Richard Hemprich
Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania

ARE THEY CRAZY?

The authors of *The End of Homework* (Resources, September) say homework cuts into quality family time. I suggest that any useful interaction between parent and child is "quality time." Parents need to become *more* involved in their children's school work, not *less*, unless they are prepared to support their unemployable kids as adults.

This book's authors also say homework sets parent against child. That's a laughable premise. Bad grades, failure notices, and behavior-related expulsions set parent against child, not homework.

Where have these authors been lately? Teaching has to be structured around homework because there are not enough in-school hours to read, practice new skills, and apply the skills to new tasks.

I substitute teach in East Los Angeles. Students refuse, for the most part, to do homework and have fallen way behind. The English teachers spend valuable class time reading the homework to the classes, and there is no time left to make sense out of what they are reading. Same problem with algebra. And, on back-to-school-night, very few parents bother to come.

Children today watch six hours of TV every day. If the authors wish to see families "reconstitute themselves as families," why not trash the TV first?

Karolyn Berkman
Los Angeles, California

I read your review of *The End of Homework* in disbelief: How could a *teachers'* magazine publish stuff like that? If you follow the logic of the authors, then going to schools is equally bad for our children: It takes time from communication with their families, overburdens children with work, and ruins kids' self-esteem if they get bad grades, which is most likely for kids who do not like homework—so let's forget schools once and forever.

No wonder American kids are behind students in other countries: Those countries don't experiment with such mad ideas.

Ilya Gutman
Marshall, Minnesota

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Last August, while traveling through Colorado, my husband and I read that Denver had a shortage of over 300 teachers.

Then, after reading the employment opportunities in *NEA Today*, we could see the reason. A math position was advertised for Aurora, Colorado (Marketplace, October). For $14 per hour, they wanted an applicant to teach grades 9-12.

The responsibilities were to prepare lessons, lecture, demonstrate, test, grade pupils, and keep parents informed. A BA in mathematics was required!

Before getting my college degree, I made more than that per hour as a waitress, and that was in the late 1960s. Come on! Colorado can't be hurting that much! Wealth is everywhere, from the cities to the weekend retreats in the mountains.

I don't want to pick on Colorado alone. Texas is experiencing the same shortage. So is Las Vegas. Someday someone will finally *get it!*

Bonnie Teigum
Las Vegas, Nevada

WRITING AS PUNISHMENT

Since this is my 18th year as a high school language arts teacher, I like to read the viewpoints of new teachers such as Julie Ollmann (Letters, September). I heartily agree with all she wrote about using writing as punishment. Sadly, we have been asking teachers not to use writing as a punishment at least as long as I have been teaching.

Maybe Julie's generation will have a greater impact than ours did.

Glenda Adamson
Beaumont, Texas

SAM THE TURTLE

One glance at the photo on page 34 of the September issue ("Alabama Support Staff Create Bus Safety Program"), and I knew how the program achieves such great success: visions of the giant turtle, Safety Sam, chasing them across the school parking lot. That's enough to keep any K-3 student on the straight and narrow.

Jake Sayraf
Ann Arbor, Michigan

GUNS

In response to your article "It's Time to Uncork the Bottle" (News, September), I agree with your sentiment, but disagree with your conclusions. As teachers and child advocates, we need to protect the children in our care.

In the matter of gun control, however, what is needed is not more laws, but enforcement of the laws currently on the books.

I empathize with Patti Nielson, but neither she nor the dead, wounded, and scarred of Columbine High would have been touched if current gun control laws had been enforced.

Even more significant: Are firearms to blame when parents and other authorities ignore the warning signs of disaffected youth?

M. Burton Hopkins, Jr.
New Castle, Delaware

VISION TEST

I was glad, as a school nurse, to see "Seeing 20/20 Isn't Enough" (Innovators, September). I have had personal experience with children who pass our vision test, yet I know they have reading difficulties.

Arline Goodman
Quincy, Massachusetts

SCHOOL FUNDRAISING

The September Debate question was, "Is school fundraising worth the time and effort?"

Del Patterson made it sound as if we are turning schools into Third World soccer ball factories. This is not Pakistan. There are *always* ways to make something educational:

1. Teach students how to make a sales presentation. In English class, students learn the elements of persuasive speech. Hmmm.

2. Have students sell in pairs and evaluate each other's presentations.

3. Have students prepare a pro and con paper or a debate on fundraising vs. increased government spending in education.

We are not doing our job unless we provide students with an opportunity to try something outside our doors that they may fail at. If they fail, teach them how to *learn* from their mistakes and try again.

About exclusive agreements: The private sector has the *most* to gain from us. We are training the future workforce. Why shouldn't we sign agreements with them to help pay?

I would hang a banner in my room if a company was going to fund a project and reduce the tax burden. Education for the students is *free*. But education is very expensive.

Finally, on Channel One: I used to teach in a Channel One school and now I don't. I can tell a *huge* difference in my classroom's knowledge of current events. Channel One is *awesome*.

Chris Osborne
Anoka, Minnesota

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

BOY SCOUTS

I was not surprised at the one-sided, biased response by NEA attorney Michael Simpson to the Supreme Court decision on the Boy Scouts (Rights Watch, September). He assumes everyone agrees the Boy Scouts are a group of "homophobic bigots" that should become "tolerant." Not once did he address the views of the Boy Scouts.

Not everyone agrees that homosexuality is a responsible and normal lifestyle, and they don't have to be a homophobic, conservative, white middle-class person to feel that way.

Simpson should be fair and report both sides of the issue.

Mike Fezzey
Ionia, Michigan

TESTS FOR CONGRESS

I am an English teacher. I also happen to be a lawyer. I was disturbed by the debate on whether candidates for Congress should be required to pass competency tests (October). Both debaters failed to state the obvious: It would be unconstitutional.

The United States is based on the premise of a government run "by the people." Many of "the people," unfortunately, lack education. Still, they have the right to run for office. We have the right to govern ourselves.

In our recent history, the ability to read and write was required for voting in some states. This was held unconstitutional because it had a racially discriminatory effect. Who is to say this won't happen again?

As a teacher, I am concerned that my representatives be competent. I find out about them before I vote. If they do a bad job in Congress, in terms my students will understand, I can vote them off the island.

Michelle Clowser
Bluffton, Indiana

WAL-MART "F"

Bravo! I didn't read your article on Wal-Mart, but if you gave them an "F," my opinion of the NEA just went up.

Apparently, Mr. Arakaki (Letters, September) thinks laying off hundreds of meatcutters nationwide because one Wal-Mart meatcutting operation voted to unionize shows the "competitive spirit of America."

Or perhaps he means the fact that Wal-Mart turned dozens of small towns into ghost towns by driving all the small businesses into bankruptcy and then closing their stores once they were deemed unprofitable.

Another shining example of "competitive spirit" was in the *60 Minutes* show when Wal-Mart's CEO thought there was nothing wrong with Kathy Lee Gifford clothes being manufactured in sweatshops by 8-year-olds.

How can any teacher condone this? Let's get Wal-Mart out of our investment portfolios!

Richard Nohel
Minneapolis, Minnesota

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

The Almighty Vote

Urge a nonvoter to vote, and you just might change the course of history.

As an old social studies teacher, I've always found the excuses people give for not voting on a par with "the dog ate my homework."

As educators concerned about children and public schools, we need to confront these excuses seriously and refute them in a reasoned but impassioned manner. With so much at stake—the White House, the Supreme Court (the next President will probably name three new justices), the Congress—it isn't enough that we vote, we must also persuade others to vote.

Excuse number one: "My vote doesn't count."

In fact, there's a ton of historical evidence that says your vote does count. In the 1960 Presidential election, for example, one vote per precinct would have elected Richard Nixon President rather than John Kennedy. Six years ago, the governor of Maryland was elected by fewer than 6,000 votes out of more than 1.4 million cast.

And this year's Presidential election is shaping up to be a very close one. Rest assured, every vote will count.

Who elects bad public officials? Good citizens who don't vote. That's why get-out-the-vote efforts really make a difference.

Excuse number two: "Elections don't really matter because politicians will promise anything to get elected, and then do whatever they please."

That all depends—on the politician.

Take North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt, for instance. Hunt, a Democrat, is a politician who has been true to his word. He promised to be a pro-public education governor and that's precisely what he has been—on everything from providing decisive support for teacher salary raises to help for low-performing schools.

Illinois Governor George Ryan, a Republican supported by our NEA state affiliate in 1996, is another such politician. Under his leadership, state funding for public schools has increased by more than a billion dollars.

Some candidates *do* deliver, and it matters tremendously whether we vote for them. Remember, bad public officials are elected by good citizens who don't vote.

Excuse number three: "There is no real difference between the candidates. Voting isn't worth the effort."

Actually, when it comes to education, differences between candidates can be quite stark. Look at the race for President.

Vice President Gore has vowed to support class-size reduction. Governor Bush says class size is a local concern. Vice President Gore wants to invest in school modernization and expansion. Governor Bush has said, "I don't believe the federal government should be building classrooms across the country."

Vice President Gore wants accountability coupled with "support" for students and educators alike. Governor Bush wants to "shine the spotlight of shame on failing schools."

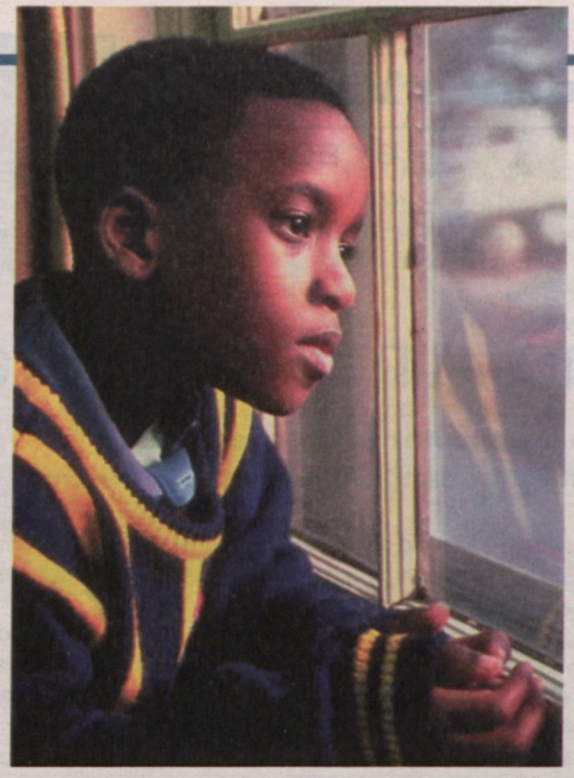
Vice President Gore opposes private school tuition vouchers. Governor Bush wants the federal government to subsidize vouchers.

This last summer, the delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly voted, in a secret ballot, by 89.5 percent, to support Al Gore for president of the United States.

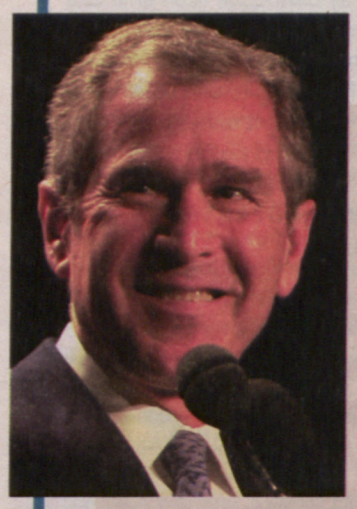
Studies have found that simply asking people to vote raises turnout. Given that reality, imagine what we, as educators, could accomplish if we urged nonvoters not just to vote, but to vote on the issues that matter to our students and schools.

In a close election, we could make all the difference in the world.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.



Are vouchers the answer for kids who don't learn?



GEORGE BUSH SAYS YES:

Vouchers for kids in poorly performing schools.

According to George Bush, if children fail to learn, we should take money from public schools to fund vouchers for private schools.

"If our children are trapped in mediocrity, if the disadvantaged students we're trying to help can't read and write, add and subtract, there must be consequences, and in my vision, the consequence shall be that the money shall no longer go to fund failure, it should go to the parents." (*Bush speech, 2/21/00*)

"I think people are afraid that vouchers will hurt public schools. I disagree." (*Dallas Morning News, 11/9/99*)

Bush's plan would provide a $1,500 tuition voucher to parents of any child enrolled in a school that does not meet government standards for student performance in three consecutive years.

AL GORE SAYS NO:

Use the money to help public schools.

Al Gore believes that there are many factors that cause children to fail and that punishing the schools that need help is not the answer for our kids.

"My administration will oppose vouchers and voucher-like plans with every ounce of strength I have. I will seek to prevent the passage of any such plan. And if such a plan would be sent to me as President, I would veto it in a second. I have always strongly opposed vouchers." (*Al Gore Videotaped Interview with NEA President Bob Chase, 8/99*)

Over the course of his entire career, Gore has led the fight to use public funds exclusively for public schools.

Get the facts before you vote.

VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7th.

This message is from the National Education Association.

National Board Certification: Time to Accentuate the Positive

Is National Board Certification for you? For this Idaho teacher, there's no doubt.

BY NANCY LARSEN

A couple of months ago, I was in a discussion about National Board Certification at a regional conference I was attending.

I was quite frankly stunned to hear some of the sentiments teachers in the room were expressing. Many were hostile to National Board Certification, with their criticisms centered around five main themes:

National Board Certification, these teachers charged, is elitist, takes money from the funding available for all teachers, is biased, costs too much, and takes too long to complete.

I disagree. Let me explain why, starting with the question of elitism. I understand why any elitism charge makes teachers wary. Labeling one group of teachers as the best creates divisiveness among us.

But I didn't seek to become a National Board Certified Teacher because I wanted to be considered one of the best. I sought national certification as a professional challenge, a chance to take a new look at my teaching and to feed my desire for growth.

Like many of my peers, I considered myself a quality teacher *before* I became a candidate. Board Certification hasn't changed that. I'm still the same person, working very hard to guide children's learning.

What has changed is that now I can justify my belief that I should be considered and treated as a professional. The standards established by the National Board are comparable to standards established for other respected professional careers.

By setting rigorous standards, National Board Certification promotes teaching as a profession. It's a step toward restoring the respect to teachers once taken for granted.

Where does the money come from to reward teachers for achieving Board Certification? In most states, this money has been allocated by specific legislation—and may not have made it into teacher hands without the impetus of National Board Certification.

I compare the money I receive as a nationally certified teacher to bonus pay I receive for achieving my master's degree. Each month, my paycheck is a bit larger because of the extra work I've done to earn my master's. This is common practice in school districts throughout the nation.

Teachers, especially teachers, are also deserving of an incentive for spending the extra time to achieve National Board status.

What about bias? Some teachers are concerned that the National Board assessment process might favor one teaching style over another. I, too, wondered about that.

In fact, teaching style never plays a part in the portfolio or assessment center exercises. What's important is that teachers demonstrate how what they do for children is based upon sound practice, or that they recognize areas where their practice isn't effective and present a plan for improvement.

I was reassured to find that the scoring process has been designed to maintain consistency and quality among the diverse group of teachers who volunteer to score entries.

To provide uniformity, each scorer attends a lengthy training seminar that includes specific training for recognizing and eliminating personal biases. For instance, regional dialect considered non-standard English in one area, but not in another, may not be considered while scoring.

And teacher names are never printed on entries and references to specific geographical regions in the body of each entry are discouraged.

Another step to achieving fairness: To eliminate bias in scoring toward those who are gifted writers, writing style is deemphasized.

The issue of time is, of course, a big one. A busy teacher values every minute in a day overflowing with responsibilities. It's not easy to find the time to complete a National Board portfolio and prepare for the assessment center exercises.

You have to find the *right* time to pursue National Board Certification, and that's always a personal decision. I decided to go for certification at a time when I was both mentoring an intern and serving as a lead teacher for my school.

I needed a boost to keep my practice with my students fresh. National Board Certification was the perfect opportunity for me.

The nearly 300 hours I spent working on National Board Certification were sandwiched into time slots I somehow found and set aside in the evenings and on weekends.

Yes, National Board Certification can be expensive, but teachers around the country are financing the $2,300 application fee in a variety of ways. More and more states offer full or partial funding to candidates.

Whether you decide to seek Board Certification or not, I hope you'll make your decision based on facts. Then it's really up to you. ✔

Tom Davenport

Idaho second grade teacher Nancy Larsen was certified as a Middle Childhood Generalist last year.

Nancy Larsen teaches at Ramsey Elementary in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Her E-mail address is nlarsen@micron.net.

You may have noticed a subtle change in some of the cartoons and illustrations placed throughout the issue.

For example, on our Letters pages, we've decided to dispense with the cartoon approach and add a little edge with an illustration.

Each month, we'll illustrate a couple of letters that have readers expressing a strong point of view.

Bill Fischer
editor

This month, we took two letters about the controversial review of a new book about homework that appeared in the September issue, and we asked an illustrator to come up with a drawing to tie in with the letters.

On our humor page, we take a different approach. Here, we need more of a cartoon than a hard-hitting illustration to capture some of those special school moments we can all relate to.

Every month, by the way, cartoonists of all skill levels send us their cartoons, hoping to break into *NEA Today*. We welcome them all.

For the Inside Scoop feature, this month on page 31, we're using illustrations to convey facts, so our approach to graphics is quite different here.

To illustrate the Dilemma questions, we go another route. We employ the talents of Ted Pitts, an illustrator from Ohio with a style that's bold, very colorful, slightly irreverent. Do these graphic elements work for you? Let us know.

Finally, let me just mention two new features of our online edition of *NEA Today*, which can be found at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Beginning with this issue, we'll be doubling the number of TV Tips listings available on *NEA Today* Online.

And, again starting with this issue, we'll also be providing hotlinks online straight to all the Web Winners listed in our Resources section. One click will do it!

Bill Fischer

Taming the Paper Tiger

Robert Chase

Is special ed paperwork devouring your time and energy? Here's real help from NEA members for keeping that tiger at bay.

Less paperwork. That was one prime goal of IDEA '97, the revision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that Congress enacted three years ago.

But—in far too many schools across the United States—NEA members are reporting that this goal simply has not been met.

Why haven't the new federal special ed reforms reduced, at least so far, the amount of paperwork that educators are required to generate for special needs students?

The problem often sits in school district central offices.

Wary of litigation and confused by conflicting interpretations of special ed regulations, many local school officials are insisting that educators document, document, document—even in situations where no federal statutes require that documentation.

The result? Overburdened staff. Individualized Education Programs—those all-important IEPs—that can run several dozen pages. Students and parents whose needs can get lost in the paperwork shuffle.

Does this all mean that you're doomed to spend the rest of your career neck-deep in paperwork that frustrates you—without appreciably helping kids?

The encouraging answer, *NEA Today* interviews with innovative educators all over the nation make clear, is definitely not.

In states from Connecticut to California, NEA members and affiliates are taking advantage of the changes in federal law that NEA helped pass back in 1997 to cut paperwork and help students learn.

Sometimes, says Patti Ralabate, an activist in NEA's Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children, the best approach to reducing paperwork may be going straight to the top—in Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, Ralabate points out, will review paperwork submitted by any state to determine whether that paperwork is too burdensome.

"One IEP package that was sent in was 43 pages long," notes this speech-language pathologist from Danbury, Connecticut. "The educators were told that most of what they were documenting was unnecessary under the new federal law."

Sometimes, add NEA activists in Florida, action at the local bargaining level can help cut paperwork down to manageable size.

The Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association, for instance, has successfully bargained for standardized IEPs as well as release time and compensation for additional work.

Other NEA members have been working at the state level. Association activists in Oregon have helped enact legislation

Veteran teacher and UniServ director Tom Ferris, pictured with his son, Dan, is helping confront paperwork problems at the bargaining table.

that will develop an IEP form that's standardized for statewide use.

And North Carolina educators are now awaiting the impact of a recently passed "Reduction of Paperwork in Public Schools" bill. This legislation aims to give educators in the state the right to refuse to provide data they've already provided elsewhere.

"In Michigan, the focus has been on trying to support all personnel who work with special ed children," adds Tom Ferris, a UniServ director in Lansing who has developed prototype contract language that advocates for support staff and teachers involved in the IEP process.

Last year, the Michigan Education Association presented the state board of ed a "Discussion Paper on Bargaining Special Education" that discusses a variety of special ed concerns, including paperwork.

In many districts across America, NEA members are joining with local administrators to streamline the paperwork process.

"My school district is using computerized forms," says Carol Comparsi, a secondary teacher in Anaheim, California. "Through a special ed task force of administrators and teachers, we were also able to get additional clerical assistance—aides getting extra work hours—for tracking paperwork."

In Washington State schools, says Julie Moore, a Central Kitsap junior high teacher, IEP forms are posted on the Web and approved for all districts to use.

"At the district level, we have a networked system that can create a paperless IEP," Moore points out. "All individuals working with a student can submit information, via computer, from anywhere in the district."

In other districts, NEA members and local school officials are trying to creatively compensate staff for time spent both planning and preparing IEPs and participating in team meetings. Some districts have hired full-time substitutes to cover classrooms for teachers in IEP meetings.

Districts are also investing in Internet-based systems that help teachers write IEPs and track workflow. Some commercially available programs allow educators to add to an IEP document, make printouts to share with parents, even generate a final report in English or Spanish.

In Iowa, the NEA state affiliate has used the state's unique fiber optic network to produce a distance learning forum that linked hundreds of special and general ed teachers.

This Iowa State Education Association event "reached a lot of people in rural areas who had no one to answer questions," says Jackie Wellborn, an eighth grade resource teacher who writes more than 30 IEPs a year.

Iowa educators have also developed electronic templates that prompt the user for information and use existing databases to "plug and play" key documents already on file into an IEP.

"The last thing we want to do is shortchange our kids."

—Jackie Wellborn, Iowa resource teacher

Shortcuts like these can save time and help eliminate unnecessary paper.

"But the last thing we ever want to do," stresses Iowa's Wellborn, "is shortchange our kids."

Michigan UniServ director Tom Ferris, the father of a teenage son with multiple impairments, agrees. To ensure kids the personal attention they need—and save time—he advises educators to share IEP drafts with parents before an IEP meeting, so that parents can come prepared to discuss options.

"You don't show up to the IEP meeting with a baked cake and ask parents to eat it," explains Ferris.

As a parent of a child with special needs, a veteran teacher, and a UniServ director, Ferris brings a special perspective to special education. Everyone involved in the process, he believes, needs to see beyond paperwork—and look to the special needs of every child.

"As a parent, what I want most for my child is an education that will help him do his best after school is over," he says. "To get to that goal, I've got to work with educators, and they've got to work with me."

Sums up Ferris: "We're a team." ✔

—Michelle Y. Green

Managing Paperwork

"I can teach or I can do paperwork. Which do you want?"

That's the all-too-common lament heard in schools across the country whenever the discussion turns to special education.

Yet, in some schools, frustrations around paperwork have significantly dropped since the 1997 reforming of the key federal legislation on special ed, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Are educators in your school able to use that act in the right way—or are they laboring under misconceptions about their paperwork responsibilities?

The New IDEA Survival Guide, *just published by the NEA Professional Library, zeroes in on many of the most widespread misunderstandings about what IDEA '97 does and does not require.*

■ **Advance Planning.** Many educators believe they can't discuss or do paperwork for an IEP ahead of an IEP meeting. Not true! Teachers can meet to discuss and even devise a draft IEP, as long as they don't make final decisions. Teachers can also share a draft IEP with the student's parents, as long as they present it as an option.

■ **Writing Goals.** Some teachers believe they have to write a goal for every single class a special ed student is taking. Not true! You only have to write goals for needs areas. If a student's difficulties are only in reading, you don't need to write math goals. Or if a student has behavioral problems, it may not be necessary to write academic objectives.

■ **Retesting Students.** A student reevaluation is indeed required every three years, but retesting may not be necessary. An IEP team may review existing data—including evaluations, information provided by parents, classroom-based assessments, and the observations of teachers and related service providers—before determining whether any additional data is needed.

■ **IEP Meetings.** Does your school hold too many IEP meetings? The minimum required for a student is one a year. You don't need to hold an IEP meeting unless you're changing a student's placement, the program goals, or the services that are provided—or unless the local district or parents request a meeting.

■ **Transition Planning and Services.** The services a student will need to transition into adulthood must be addressed in an IEP when a student hits a certain age. But it's not necessary to prepare a separate transition document.

■ **Behavioral Intervention Plans.** Some teachers believe that every IEP requires a behavioral component. This is true only if the student's disability causes behavior that impedes the student's learning or the learning of other students.

Download* The New IDEA Survival Guide *from the Web at www.nea. org/books. Copies of this new NEA Professional Library book ($5.95 NEA members, $6.95 non-members) can also be ordered at this site or by calling 1-800-229-4200 (ask for item #2016-2-00-F).

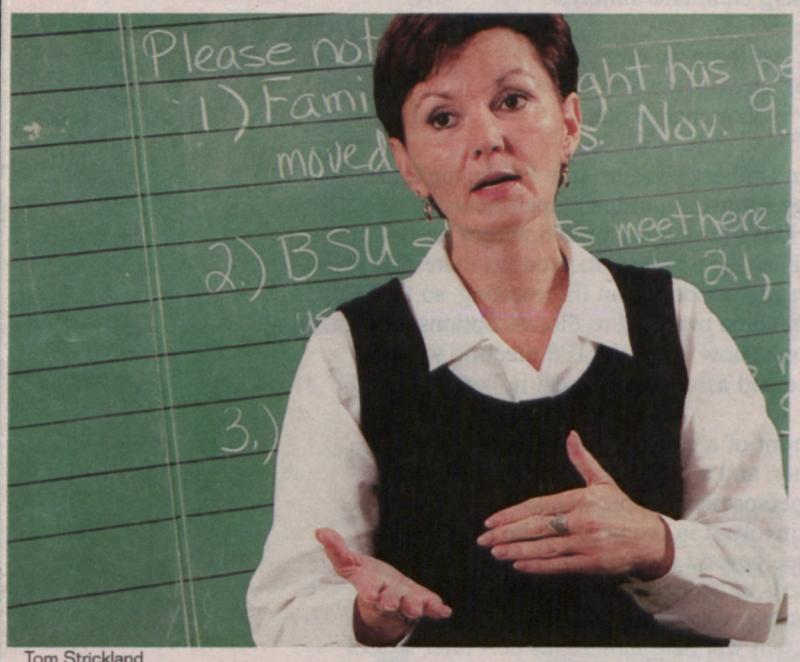
Q&A

People, Not Paperwork

Sharon Schultz is an instructor in the Department of Special Education at Ball State University in Indiana. A staff development consultant, she provides technical assistance to schools implementing IDEA.

Why so much paperwork?

Over the years there's been litigation. And it's been emphasized, "document, document, document." Pages of paperwork have been added to cover issues at the local or state level. Local districts have added things because the state has come in for review and said, "I don't see documentation for this." A colleague tells me her school's IEP has 33 pages. In fact, if you look at the federal component, an IEP can be distilled into a four- or five-page form.



Tom Strickland

Like the Department of Education's model IEP?

Yes, and many states have developed their own. Indiana allows you to prepare a Case Conference Committee Report, a summary of the team meeting that lists the components of the IEP. Present levels of performance, goals, and objectives can be easily copied and referenced for all staff members working with that child. Other information, such as disability categories, do not have to be forwarded at all. The focus is on the services.

Are there other strategies?

People tend to make lists and lists, then go through and check them off. If you come to an IEP meeting with the purpose of looking individually at the student and talking about the services the student needs without the checklist, you actually have a lot less paper. We're so focused on everything that has to be documented that we lose focus on the child.

The purpose of the team meeting is to brainstorm about what services the child needs to progress in the general ed curriculum. If we start making connections to the curriculum and standards-based learning, I truly believe our need to write and write and write can actually be lessened.

How can educators get that message across?

Talk to coordinators about what's useful and what's not. Find out what portions have meaning for educators, for students, and for parents. And if we find things that just aren't working, let's talk about it. I hope we can collaborate to create meaningful IEPs that will cause us to act in the best interests of the child. When we develop a higher level of trust, we won't feel compelled to put everything in writing. ✔

For more: schultzsr@ home.com

Resources

- The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has released a *Guide to the Individualized Education Program* to help educators, parents, and state and local educational agencies implement the requirements of IDEA on IEPs. Online at www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS.

- For a summary of key points of the final IDEA legislation in the areas that most affect NEA members, read *The NEA Report on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* at www.nea.org/publiced/idea/.

NEA's Paraeducator Task Force has released a new brochure, *Paraeducators and IDEA: What Paraeducators Need to Know to Advocate for Themselves.* Contact nchappelle@nea.org.

- The Aspire Partnership (Associations of Service Providers Implementing IDEA Reforms in Education) hosts the IDEA Practices Web site (www.ideapractices.org) and distributes IDEAnews. Free at www.ideapractices.org/forms/maillist.asp.

- The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs' IDEA 97 Training Package, now available online, offers nearly 500 pages of background information, resources, handouts, and training scripts on the law and a series of 145 overhead transparencies in English and Spanish. Check www.nichcy.org/Trainpkg/trainpkg.htm.

- The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities offers free Disability Fact Sheets and Briefing Papers. www.nichcy.org/disabinf.htm.

- A Council for Exceptional Children workshop on adapting curricular materials for the inclusive secondary classroom will run online February 7 at 2 - 3:30 p.m. EST. Check www.cec.sped.org/pd/feb7web.html.

Percentage of Children Served Under IDEA

During the 1998-99 School Year, All Disabilities

State	Age Group 6-17							
Alabama	11.90	Illinois	11.59	Montana	10.16	Puerto Rico	6.00
Alaska	11.51	Indiana	12.35	Nebraska	12.11	Rhode Island	14.87
Arizona	9.25	Iowa	12.31	Nevada	9.48	South Carolina	12.95
Arkansas	10.76	Kansas	10.23	New Hampshire	11.38	South Dakota	9.16
California	9.34	Kentucky	10.35	New Jersey	13.88	Tennessee	12.41
Colorado	9.09	Louisiana	9.89	New Mexico	13.05	Texas	11.55
Connecticut	12.29	Maine	13.84	New York	11.98	Utah	10.24
Delaware	11.64	Maryland	11.23	North Carolina	11.17	Vermont	10.68
District of Columbia	10.82	Massachusetts	14.76	North Dakota	9.89	Virginia	12.06
Florida	12.72	Michigan	10.18	Ohio	10.16	Washington	9.70
Georgia	10.14	Minnesota	10.33	Oklahoma	11.66	West Virginia	14.87
Hawaii	9.28	Mississippi	10.29	Oregon	10.81	Wisconsin	10.25
Idaho	9.62	Missouri	11.98	Pennsylvania	9.80	Wyoming	11.91

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS). Data based on estimated resident population provided by the U.S. Census Bureau for December 1, 1998, updated as of November 1, 1999.

Should Special Needs Students Be Exempt From Graduation Tests?

TIMOTHY BUSH *teaches special education at Seaford Senior High School in Delaware. Currently a member of the Delaware State Education Association executive board, he's also a lead teacher for his district's New Teacher Mentoring Program.*

yes

Special educators are trained to look at the whole child and make decisions based on individual needs. I feel that I must qualify my "yes" answer by rephrasing the question to read, "Should some special need students be exempt from taking graduation tests?"

I don't believe students should be routinely exempted, but I do believe that only the experts who participate on a student's Child Study Team should make that decision. As long as bureaucrats and politicians can mandate that all students take a single test to graduate, a team's ability to exempt a student from such testing is compromised.

If special needs students are lumped together with non-disabled peers and required to take high-stakes tests without procedural safeguards, I have grave concerns about fairness.

These concerns center around how special needs students are identified and tracked, what accommodations for them are made, and whether a single indicator is relied on for an assessment.

The referral process for identifying special education students always involves the use of multiple indicators. Tests, observations, psychological reports, student work samples, parent and teacher interviews, and many other tools are used to identify, describe, and provide information about disabilities that may be affecting a student's performance.

After identification, appropriate individual accommodations, supports, and adaptations are developed to modify instruction, allowing for as much success as possible. When tests are used in the classroom, they are often modified in ways consistent with a student's IEP and list of appropriate accommodations.

It's understood that the nature of a student's disability might not allow that student to demonstrate mastery of concepts the way other students do. Why isn't it understood that graduation tests require the same modification?

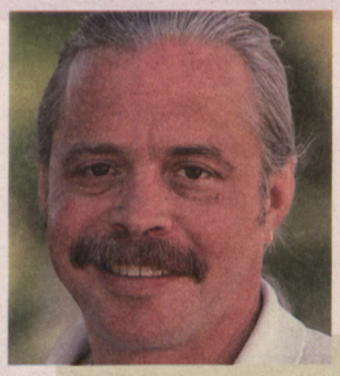
I believe that holding all students accountable to high graduation standards is certainly important and necessary. But test designers often fail to consider the possible disabilities of students taking the graduation tests. They construct the test items with standards in mind, but do they think about what kinds of students must take the test?

What about students who have visual or motor problems that interfere with their ability to quickly process and respond to information? Will the test come in a format that allows it to be untimed for these students?

Can the test be broken into segments or must it be taken in one massive block? Will there be enlarged print or Braille versions?

It's extremely difficult for test makers to anticipate the wide variety of accommodations that may be required, which returns us to the concept of considering special needs students on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Ultimately, I think, we may need to develop criteria for creating a "body of evidence" that assesses student mastery. My overriding concern is that special needs students be treated fairly. To do anything less is simply discriminatory and unfair. ✔



ED AMUNDSON *is a special education teacher at C. K. McClatchy High School in Sacramento, California. Chair of NEA's Caucus of Educators for Exceptional Children, he is a national presenter and staff trainer on special education issues.*

no

The question is not whether special needs students should be exempt from taking graduation tests. The real question is whether students should be required to take tests that do not include appropriate accommodations. The answer is no.

As states and locals move towards higher standards and expectations, it's critical to include students with special needs. For many years special ed was viewed as an adjunct program that was trying to "mainstream" such students into the general ed environment. Access to the curriculum was an afterthought.

Under IDEA '97, the emphasis is not just on access to the school but access to the curriculum as well, and, with it, recognition of student effort. We now expect that, with appropriate accommodations, students can complete the core curriculum.

Many states and locals currently acknowledge the different learning needs of all students and make accommodations through the IEP process. Schools recognize student strengths and weaknesses and allow for measures of what a student knows and not what they do not. Should a standard exit exam do the same?

I posed this question to a group of secondary learning disabled students to get their impressions. Their response was intriguing. The feeling was unanimous that they should be required to take an exit exam. They are eager to show what they have accomplished.

But these students were perplexed about why the core classes required to graduate could be modified but not the tests that would measure their success.

As one student put it: "I am good at some things and not others, but how would anyone know?"

The question is valid. What other people may know or perceive is extremely important. If students are not awarded diplomas, what do they receive?

If the purpose of a diploma is to demonstrate a student has successfully completed the required course of study, anything less sends a message of failure the student will carry for life.

"All potential employers are going to think is that I did not make the grade," one student told me. "They won't know how hard I worked, what I did learn, or what I can still learn. For the rest of my life, my application will say I couldn't do it. That just isn't fair."

Many would argue that making accommodations creates an unequal playing field. But equal is not the issue. Equal is when every student gets the same thing. Fair is when all students get what they need.

The national demand for high standards and accountability is appropriate for all students. But it's patently unfair not to make the accommodations that will enable students with special needs to demonstrate their abilities.

Would we not make accommodations for a student in a wheelchair? A disability is a disability.

For many students, gaining a high school diploma is a major life goal. As educators, we are the keys that open doors to opportunity and dreams. We must leave the door open for all students. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should special needs students be exempt from graduation tests?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should candidates for Congress be required to pass competency tests?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
69% Yes **31% No**

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Fighting Vouchers—It's *Everybody's* Job

NEA members have four good reasons to defeat voucher initiatives in California and Michigan.

In Macomb County, Michigan, these NEA activists are fighting vouchers by publicizing what's great about their public schools. Their slogan: "P.S. I love you."

While undergoing chemotherapy to beat cancer, California guidance counselor Erma Kyser has both "good" and "bad" days and knows she has to work hard to avoid infections and to "just feel good again."

Yet somehow, this NEA member has *also* summoned the will to fight Proposition 38, a November ballot initiative that would amend California's state constitution to authorize an annual $4,000 voucher for every student—rich or poor—within four years.

One day recently, Kyser opened her home to phone-banking volunteers from the Sacramento City Teachers Association/CTA. Fifteen educators, munching on pizza and Chinese food, paced back and forth with cell phones, explaining to fellow Association members why they should help defeat Prop 38.

Kyser, a 25-year Association activist, says she made her house available to help save another—the house of public education.

"Allow vouchers inside, and people start taking pieces of structure away, until that house falls down," she stresses. "If I didn't do this, I'd be shirking my responsibility to protect kids."

Dedication like this you just can't buy, even with the $20 million that Prop 38 sponsor Tim Draper has pledged to sink into the campaign—or the iMac computers, Macy's shopping sprees, and Hawaii dream vacations this Silicon Valley billionaire has awarded his Prop 38 campaign "team leaders."

And that's pretty much the story this autumn in two key states, California and Michigan. In both places, big-money backers of voucher initiatives are coming up against dedicated NEA members and other public education advocates, unified in broad-based "vote no" coalitions.

In California, Draper—a free-marketeer who considers public education "socialistic"—is opposed by a diverse anti-voucher coalition of educators, parents, elected officials, business groups, Republicans and Democrats, taxpayer advocates, ethnic minorities, seniors, and community activists.

Bolstering their cause have been anti-voucher commercials featuring Governor Gray Davis and Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamente, and statements of opposition to Prop 38 from Presidential candidate Al Gore and his running mate, Joe Lieberman.

In Michigan, the pro-voucher Prop 1 is being bankrolled by the ultraconservative DeVos family—founders of the $5 billion-a-year Amway soap and direct marketing empire—with added donations from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Domino's Pizza founder Tom Monahan, and the Michigan Catholic Conference, among others.

For an update on the nation's biggest voucher battle this fall, see www.novouchers2000.com.

Fighting Prop 1 is a broad coalition uniting every organization from the Michigan NEA state affiliate and school boards association to the Episcopal and United Methodist churches.

And lending strong support are public officials like state Attorney General Jennifer Granholm and Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer.

On paper, the two state voucher initiatives are significantly different.

California Prop 38 would make vouchers available to all students within four years, while Michigan Prop 1 would lift a ban on indirect public aid to private schools and authorize $3,100 vouchers in districts with graduation rates of under two-thirds.

The Michigan initiative would also make it easy for district voters or school boards to adopt local voucher plans and would require "teacher testing" in both public schools and private schools that redeem vouchers.

But, in reality, the California and Michigan initiatives would inflict the same damage on public schools. Both schemes would:

1) Cost taxpayers billions of dollars. NEA affiliates in both states estimate huge losses in state per-pupil payments to local districts, up to $1 billion a year when the Michigan initiative kicks in, and a whopping $3 billion in California within four years just to provide $4,000 vouchers for that state's 700,000 private school and home-schooled students.

Add in administrative costs for these ambitious programs, plus the diversion of funds from other education programs—like class-size reduction and building renovation—to pay for private and religious school aid, and the fiscal drain becomes a budget buster.

2) Provide no accountability to taxpayers. The California and Michigan initiatives would send public funds to totally unregulated voucher schools that can make financial decisions in secret and are not required to undergo a financial audit.

In fact, the California measure stipulates that voucher-redeeming private schools be "free from unnecessary, burdensome, or onerous regulations." That means everything from teacher credentialing standards to building fire codes.

3) Hurt kids. Voucher schools, not parents, would choose which school students can attend and be allowed to reject children for almost any reason,

Charlie Cortez

including gender, religion, language, ability to pay, or academic or physical ability.

"What really aggravates me," says guidance counselor Erma Kyser, "is that voucher promoters target minority kids without letting them into voucher schools!"

4) Abandon neighborhood schools. Vouchers would cut funding to local public schools, meaning fewer educators, fewer supplies, and more overcrowded classrooms.

"In Michigan, we know from experience with enrollment loss to unregulated charter schools that the first jobs to be cut will be ESP jobs," says David Hockaday, president of the 562-member Lansing Educational Assistants. "Our district already plans to close four small neighborhood schools because of declining enrollment. Vouchers would double the damage.

"If I didn't fight vouchers, I'd be shirking my responsibility to protect kids."

—California guidance counselor Erma Kyser

"Some 87 percent of our paraeducators live in Lansing neighborhoods, and 60 percent of them are single wage earners," Hockaday adds. "If their jobs are cut, their work won't go away."

Private and religious schools, he notes, only take the students they want. Children who are at-risk or have special needs will be left behind—and they're the ones who need extra help.

"Getting out there to fight voucher initiatives," sums up Hockaday, "is the job of *every* NEA member. ✔

For more info on this fall's voucher battles, go to the California Teachers Association Web site at www.cta.org and the Michigan Education Association site at www.mea.org.

Voucher Pushers Outspend Us, But They Can't Outwork Us

NEA members fight vouchers by reaching out and speaking out, for kids and public schools.

NEA members may not be able to outspend the high rollers who are funding voucher initiatives this November in California and Michigan. But they can certainly outwork them.

In both states, Association members are working with "vote no" coalition allies—everyone from school administrators to religious leaders—and fighting back by:

■ **Being visible.** Hundreds of thousands of anti-voucher yard signs have sprouted in California and Michigan, while NEA members are proudly sporting "vote no" buttons—which in Michigan are in the same distinctive black-and-green colors used on all public school signs.

■ **Being heard.** Coalition-sponsored media spots and press events are informing the public about the dangers vouchers pose to children and public education. These messages are bolstered by volunteer phone banks run out of local Association offices.

"We've got 17 phone lines, used by educators from different schools at different times," reports Sacramento City Teachers Association President Tom Rogers. "And we're competing with our colleagues in Elk Grove and San Juan to see who makes the most phone calls!"

■ **Staying organized.** In both California and Michigan, anti-voucher coalition coordinators are directing local-level "no" campaigns that include phone banks, precinct walking, and literature distribution. "Our state's All Kids First coalition has a full campaign plan in each county," reports Michigan Education Association staffer Al Short, "and it has two Detroit coordinators, who work closely with Mayor Dennis Archer, the NAACP, and major ministers' organizations."

■ **Talking up public schools.** In Macomb County, Michigan, the Warren Education Association's 14-member Public Relations Committee, working with "PR reps" in each of Warren Consolidated Schools' 26 buildings, has already spent years publicizing what works *right* in their district. Warren activists do press outreach, essay contests, and mall exhibitions that include actual classes.

This PR Committee, chaired by Sandy Kush, is now channeling positive local vibes about public schools into a comprehensive anti-voucher campaign, complete with a "P.S. I Love You" slogan created by member Lucile Demanksi and a sticker designed by Warren Mott High School art student Karen Roney.

This campaign—uniting teachers, ESP, administrators, and members of the Warren chapter of Parents for Public Schools—is using everything from phone banks to friend-to-friend postcards to urge district residents to vote against the pro-voucher Prop 1.

■ **Being aggressive.** The California Teachers Association can't match billionaire Tim Draper's fortune, but he can't match the "strength, perseverance, and determination on our side," says CTA President Wayne Johnson.

"We have people everywhere who are working for what is right for our children and public education," says Johnson. "Draper may have the money, but we have the *people*, and we'll be out there convincing the public to vote 'No on 38' every day until Election Day." ✔

Heroes & Zeroes

Paul Tañedo

▲ NEA has given its 2000 Friend of Education Award to Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy for his four decades of hard work on behalf of children and public education. NEA President Bob Chase notes that every major education law passed since the 1960s has borne Kennedy's imprint, from Head Start to the Class Size Reduction Act.

▼ Human rights organizations have condemned the government of Peru for passing a new law that sets the legal minimum wage for child workers at 12, the youngest in Latin America.

▲ In September, the 1,450 teacher and ESP members of the Hamilton Township (New Jersey) Education Association staged an eight-day strike in the face of a court injunction and some $2.5 million in fines. But these NEA members stuck together and won a 13.55 percent raise over three years.

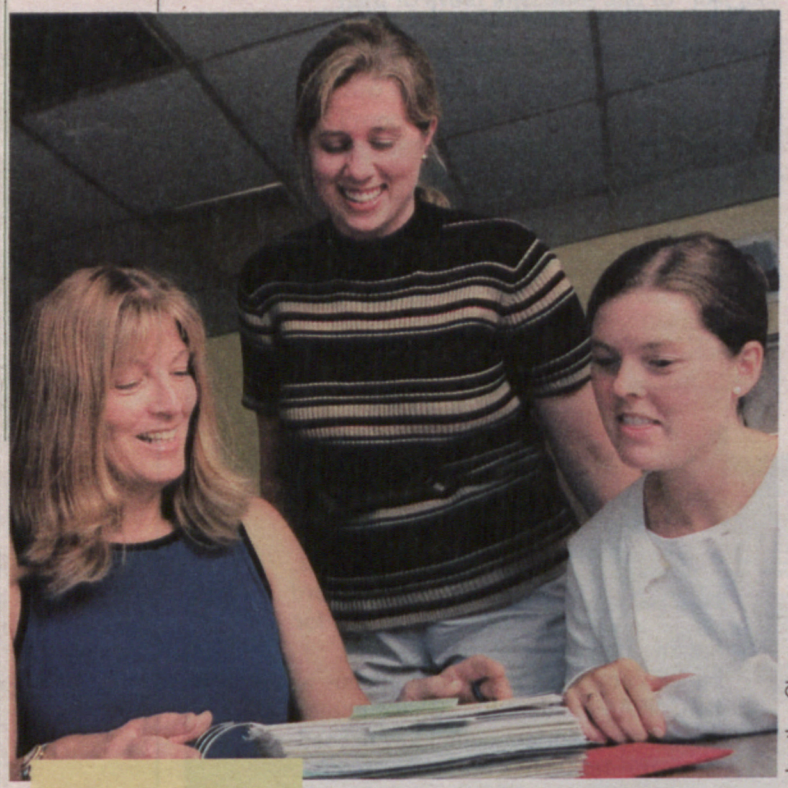
That's heroic enough, but gutsier *yet* were 105 members of the Hamilton Township School Secretaries Association. Even though they had a contract, these ESP honored the HTEA picket line—while facing individual fines of $50 a day. *That's* solidarity.

Where Teacher Quality Pays Off

Through legislation won by NEA's Connecticut affiliate in 1986, teachers get decent pay in return for tough—very tough—standards.

When Connecticut math teacher Elise Santoro enters Ridgefield High at 6:45 a.m., she isn't the first educator in the building. And when she has to leave at 3 p.m.—instead of her usual later hour—the faculty parking lot is still mostly full.

"We work *long* hours," Santoro says, "and we work over the summer, doing things like writing new courses or attending workshops. I remember when summers were free."



Jonathan Olson

Elise Santoro, left, confers with fellow Ridgefield High math teachers Christine Terkildsen, center, and Mary Ellen Dunne.

But don't get Santoro wrong. This 23-year veteran absolutely loves teaching. And she's proud of her colleagues' dedication, the quality instruction they deliver, and their willingness to help new teachers.

And Santoro, the president of NEA-Ridgefield, has no problem comfortably using a word often abused by teacher-bashing politicians: accountability.

"When you come to a state with some of the better teacher salaries in the country," she declares, "accountability is right and natural. We've worked hard to earn our salaries, and we've been very accountable. Just look at what we've produced!"

And what NEA members in Connecticut have produced are some of the most remarkable gains in student achievement in the entire nation.

The most compelling record of Connecticut's success, *The Washington Post* notes, comes from the nation's report card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

In this federally sponsored battery of tests, Connecticut ranked first in fourth-grade math in 1996, first in fourth- and eighth-grade reading in 1998, and first in writing in 1999.

"The number of Connecticut fourth graders reaching the 'proficient' level on the reading test jumped from 34 percent in 1992 to 46 percent in 1998, the greatest improvement in the country," the *Post* points out.

Why are students achieving so well in Connecticut? Some point to the state's high ranking on national measures of level of education and socio-economic well-being.

Connecticut certainly does rank high on these measures. But Connecticut has ranked high on these measures for years. What these rankings don't explain is why Connecticut student achievement has *increased* so dramatically.

To explain that increase, say veteran NEA members in Connecticut, you need to look back to 1986, the year state legislators passed a landmark Educational Enhancement Act.

The passage of this sweeping legislation capped a three-year public relations and lobbying campaign by the Connecticut Education Association to simultaneously lift salaries *and* standards for the state's educators.

To get the Act enacted, CEA had to build wide public support for teacher raises and work closely with both then-Democratic Governor William O'Neill and GOP legislative leaders.

The legislation that emerged from all this hard work allocated $300 million over three years for higher teacher salaries and established a new, three-level system of teaching certification.

The legislation also ushered in tough standards for entry into the teaching profession and coupled these standards with a teacher induction program designed to really help new teachers.

Together, all these changes created a a new stage for Connecticut's classroom teachers, and, ever since, they've played the starring role in the state's remarkable student achievement story.

Today, Connecticut teachers are among the best paid in the nation. The 2000-01 statewide salary averages, CEA researchers note, range from a bachelor's minimum of $31,204 to a $58,451 master's maximum and a $62,258 sixth-year max.

"When you come to a state with some of the nation's better teacher salaries, accountability is right and natural."

—NEA-Ridgefield President Elise Santoro

Incoming Connecticut teachers, meanwhile, are among the most highly qualified in the nation. They must pass both the Praxis I basic skills exam (unless they achieve a minimum SAT score) and the Praxis II content area test, if there is one that applies.

Incoming teachers must also have majored in the area where they want to be certified.

Once new teachers earn a provisional, or second-level, certificate—valid for eight years—they must earn a master's, or 30 credits beyond a bachelor's, to gain a "professional" certificate, which is then renewed every five years through continuing education credits.

Connecticut accountability doesn't end there. In their second year, most new teachers must complete a subject-specific portfolio that focuses on factors that impact professional practice.

In these portfolios, educators show

THE BOTTOM LINE

CLASS SIZE: Some 23,000 schools across the nation, almost one-third of the nation's elementaries, are adding teachers to create smaller classes, with help from the new federal Class Size Reduction Program. For more: www.nea.org/lac/size.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADS: More American adults than ever before, 83.4 percent, now have high school diplomas. And one in four adults have also earned a college degree. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/cb00-151.html.

CYBERSPACE: The number of people online on the Internet is up more than 3,000 times since 1993. English is the top-ranking Internet language, with Japanese second, and German third. For more: usic.wslogic.com/intro.html.

FAMILIES: A new U.S. Labor Department regulation now allows states to offer unemployment comp to new parents on family leave. For more: www.nationalpartnership.org/news/pressreleases/2000/061000.htm.

why they had planned a particular lesson, what worked right, and what they would have done differently—all documented with daily logs, written summaries, and videotape.

Sandy White, a third-year teacher at Ridgefield's Scotland Elementary, recalls that in her first year she had to complete a portfolio that required her to write out five consecutive days of numeracy and literacy lessons, then document the lessons' effectiveness on two students—a low performer and a higher achiever.

"I had to show that both students grasped particular concepts," she says. "I had to do a lot of reflection on my own teaching."

Pretty stressful stuff for any educator, let alone a newbie. Fortunately, new Connecticut teachers are getting lots of help from their NEA state affiliate to negotiate the high hurdles to state certification.

CEA is pressing legislators and state education officials to make the state-run Beginning Educator Support and Training—BEST—Program meet all the promises made for it back in 1986.

The three-year program currently guarantees a mentor or "team support" for each first-year teacher and a series of clinics and new teacher workshops. BEST policy also encourages districts to provide release time so mentors and new teachers can work together.

But BEST doesn't provide mentors in the crucial portfolio year or *require* districts to grant release time.

"We're attempting to get a legislated funding increase for BEST," says CEA staffer Cliff Silver, "to get it back to what it was when the Educational Enhancement Act was passed."

"In the meantime," adds CEA staffer Linette Branham, "CEA and local affiliates are holding new teacher workshops to explain how the Association can help, and we've laid out, in great detail, a two-year portfolio preparation program, with a role for the local Association."

CEA teacher activists have also organized a "BEST Advocate Program" and brainstormed how local affiliate leaders can work with principals and district BEST "liaisons" to make BEST meet its promise to novice teachers.

One BEST Advocate, NEA-Ridgefield President Elise Santoro, is now working with local activists to implement some of the emerging new ideas.

Santoro is especially proud of a new local video about the BEST program, produced with a CEA grant and the talents of members like Eric Madsen, B.G. Brown, and Mark Reinders.

The video introduces newcomers to Ridgefield and the mentoring and portfolio process, and, appearing on it, are three recent survivors of the BEST portfolio ordeal, including Sandy White.

"I offer basic portfolio advice," notes White, "things like typing up your log daily, saving student work samples in advance, and keeping track of your most powerful lessons in the first year."

"Connecticut teachers recognize that supporting new educators will help keep them in the profession," says CEA's Branham. "It's a real challenge—but no greater than winning passage of the Educational Enhancement Act in the first place." ✔

For more information about the BEST Advocate Program, contact CEA staffer Linette Branham at linetteb@cea.org.

Do'ers Profile

■ **Name and profession:** Doug Provencio, K-12 substitute teacher

■ **NEA local affiliate:** Oakland (California) Education Association/CTA

■ **Positions:** President of the NEA Substitute Teachers Caucus, OEA executive board member, and building rep

■ **Latest accomplishment:** By networking through the Internet, Provencio and other members of the Substitute Teachers Caucus have built an organization that's "growing by leaps and bounds." They're also using the Web to extend solidarity to fellow substitutes across the country, help them organize in the face of isolation and even disrespect, and compile information on the common problems subs face and the solutions they devise.

"Many districts maintain that they pay 'extravagant' daily wages," notes Provencio, "but it has now become easy for subs to use county-wide Web sites to prove how many districts pay more than, say, $100 per day.

"The misuse of substitutes as replacements for permanent classroom teachers or of temp agencies to hire substitutes are unhealthy trends for both subs and schools," Provencio stresses. "The Web has info on collective bargaining language that can stop management from buying into these trends.

David Bacon

DOUG PROVENCIO

"Subs really want better professional development," the caucus leader adds. "Now we can go online to learn about the states that are starting in-service programs specifically for us, as well as to find a profusion of curriculum Web sites. Our caucus database on these issues has a ways to go, but it's come quite far in the past three years."

■ **Words of wisdom:** "More and more substitute teachers are unionizing, which helps improve the pay and working conditions needed to end widespread sub shortages. But we bring more than just warm bodies to schools and dues money to local Associations. Many of us—students and retirees—will be or have been in a regular permanent classroom career. Others of us are artists, writers, parents, technology experts, and community residents. We bring a new and enriching perspective to classes we visit.

"Moreover, subs make great phonebankers. We practice our telephone skills getting our assignments and talking to teachers about what will or did happen in their classroom. In these times of attacks on public education, teachers need all the friends we can get—especially when there are more educators who should join our local Associations."

To contact Doug Provencio, send an E-mail message to HeyMrPro@aol.com.

BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

Political Action Made a Difference

Why are Connecticut teachers among the best paid in the nation?

Some factors: the Educational Enhancement Act (EEA) of 1986, a vibrant state economy, binding contract arbitration, and *strong* political action by NEA's state affiliate.

That political activism helped elect William A. O'Neill, Connecticut's governor during the 1980s.

O'Neill laid the groundwork for passage of the EEA by establishing a commission to investigate teacher salaries. And when lawmakers deadlocked on a resulting teacher pay/standards bill in the 1986 regular session, O'Neill had state troopers hand-deliver each of them a summons to a special session.

"The best of minds were not going into teaching because of low salaries," O'Neill explains today. "It was time to call for higher standards and pay so that Connecticut could compete in the real world. My wife had been a teacher back before I was elected, making just $17,000 with 20 years and a master's.

"The EEA has worked well," O'Neill says with pride. "Connecticut today is number one or two in the nation in terms of educational quality." ✔

INEQUALITY: Between 1995 and 1997, the latest year with data, after-tax incomes of the top 1 percent of taxpayers rose $121,000, or 31 percent. After-tax incomes of the bottom 90 percent rose 3 percent. For more: http://www.cbpp.org/9-4-00inc.htm.

TAXES: The George Bush tax cut proposal would, if enacted, save the richest 1 percent of taxpayers an average $46,072 annually. Of the plan's $1.9 trillion in benefits, 43 percent would go to this top 1 percent. For more: www.ctj.org/html/bush0800.htm.

FUNDING: High-poverty school districts now receive 11 percent of their revenue from federal programs, but per pupil spending in these districts still lags other districts by over 10 percent. For more: www.ed.gov/PressReleases/08-2000/0811.html.

PRISON: Nearly 1.5 million U.S. children have a parent in prison, a 60 percent increase since 1991. Overall, the nation's prison population grew 62 percent in the 1990s. For more: www.cwla.org/cwla/prison/parentsinprison.html.

Paying the Price for Professionalism

By sticking together and telling their stories to legislators, Delaware ESP win their largest pay increase in 20 years.

Gary Emeigh

Delaware food service staffers like Lynn Lenker, right, know that their nutritious meals and love for kids directly impact student achievement.

The 10 food service staffers at Middletown High School in Delaware are quite proud of the quality of their baked goods, chicken cheese steaks, and subs—not to mention the fully balanced menus and range of options they offer each day to MHS's 1,200 students.

The meals they serve, these NEA members say, meet recommended dietary guidelines and help develop healthy, lifelong eating habits.

"We're proud that we've reduced total fat consumption to 30 percent of calories in all of our meals," says assistant cook Lynn Lenker. "We provide a wholesome breakfast and lunch."

Hungry children, Lenker adds, are lethargic, irritable, and have shorter attention spans.

"Studies show that children who eat a nutritious breakfast," she explains, "improve their reading skills and test scores."

But MHS's quality cuisine comes at a human price. Middletown district food service employees unionized last year to tackle issues like staffing cutbacks—in the face of booming student enrollment—and working conditions that cause rapid turnover.

"You're constantly moving on this job," says Lenker, president of the 29-member Appoquinimink Food Service Workers Association. "We're always cooking, even during the last lunch, to keep food fresh. After that, we clean trays and utensils, sterilize the serving line, and sweep and mop.

"Even three hours on this job can feel like 10," groans Lenker, a five-hour employee. "Not many people want to do this amount of work for so little pay, plus shell out money up front for a uniform and a $50 state background check."

If anyone needs to hear this message, it's Delaware legislators. Educational support staff are technically employed as a class of state workers, but they get second-class treatment.

Last year, in fact, support staff got lower raises than state employees in comparable civil service job titles.

But legislators are starting to listen, thanks to a two-year grassroots lobbying campaign waged by 2,300 ESP members of the Delaware State Education Association.

In the last legislative session, the Republican-dominated House and Senate approved a new budget, signed into law by Democratic Governor Thomas Carper, that gives many Delaware ESP their largest pay increase in 20 years.

The budget adds $1,000 to the full-time pay scales of secretarial, paraprofessional, custodial, and food service employees, plus another step at the top of each salary lane. The law also mandates a new ESP salary study due in by December 1.

Moreover, the budget increases the state share of funding for local food service salaries, including a boost from 41 to 50 percent for cooks and general workers. Aside from locally bargained pay supplements, that'll mean a raise from $9.72 to $10.61 an hour for a cook/baker at the top of the scale and a boost for a starting general worker from $6.88 to $7.67.

"Delaware ESP clearly still have a long way to go," stresses DSEA Treasurer Julie Coleman, a paraeducator from the Caesar Rodney school district in Camden. "But this raise has increased morale and assured our members that they're not 'forgotten personnel.'"

It's hard to be forgotten when you make so much noise.

In the last session, Delaware's 62 legislators constantly heard from their underpaid ESP constituents—on supermarket lines, via E-mails and phone calls, through a 5,000-signature petition initiated by paraeducators, and through ESP visits to Dover, the state capital.

"Personal contact made a real difference," says Coleman. "During one trip to Dover, four of us showed Joint Finance Committee members our broad job descriptions and introduced them to

THE BOTTOM LINE

TESTING: SAT math scores have hit a 30-year high of 514. Verbal scores are steady at 505, a good sign given the increase of non-native English-speaking test-takers. For more: www.collegeboard.com/press/senior00/html/000829.html.

MORE TESTING: A new American Education Research Association policy statement calls for the "ongoing evaluation of both intended and unintended consequences" of high-stakes tests. For more: www.aera.net/about/policy/stakes.htm.

ZERO TOLERANCE: In 1998, schools expelled more than 87,000 students. Just 26 states require alternative education assignments for expelled students. For more: www.law.harvard.edu/groups/civilrights/conferences/zero/zt_report.html.

BABY BOOM ECHO: Full-time college enrollment will increase an estimated 19 percent in the next decade. In Florida alone, the state higher ed system expects up to 100,000 more students by 2010. For more: www.ed.gov/pubs/ bbecho00/index.html.

a teacher, Ginger Pledgi, who described how paras make things run more smoothly in her classroom."

To educate legislators on the growing complexity of educational support jobs, last winter DSEA's eight-member ESP Committee invited legislators to two regional social events to hear support staffers from all job categories describe their work in detail.

"Our ESP are unified, passionate, and not afraid to tell their stories. It works!"

—Delaware State Education Association President Mary Ann Pry

"What struck these lawmakers," notes DSEA President Mary Ann Pry, "was the enormous responsibility ESP have, the passion they articulate for children and their jobs, and the disparity between these factors and their compensation."

Count on Diamond State NEA members to keep on telling their stories—with a passion—as they help legislators compile the new ESP compensation report this fall. Above all, these support staffers will be stressing the need to:

■ **Recognize increased ESP responsibilities.** Delaware custodians, say DSEA leaders, must know how to handle hazardous chemicals, operate sophisticated computer controls, and serve as ambassadors to community groups that meet in their buildings after hours. And, because of a substitute teacher shortage, the state's paraeducators are being assigned ever more instructional duties, in both classrooms and Title 1 reading labs.

"In the last five years," notes DSEA Para Issues Committee Chair Barbara Morris, "more students have come to inclusion classrooms with more disabilities than ever before."

Teachers, she adds, require discipline and translation assistance from paras on a constant basis.

"Paras are making more decisions on their own," says Morris, "either while taking students into the community or coming up with materials or programs to help kids reach their IEPs."

■ **Recruit and retain qualified support professionals.** "I could walk out of my job today and make $5,000 more working in Delaware's banking industry," declares Pat Downes, a 15-year secretary in the Christina school district. "We stay here because we love being with the children. But because we don't get tuition reimbursement, the banks are taking a lot of younger secretaries who want to get credits or complete college."

Severe understaffing, in the face of a growing workload, is making bank jobs even more attractive.

School office tasks in Christina, says Downes, include completing "accountability" paperwork, recording student moves, composing detailed reports with charts and graphs, and interacting with a broad range of visitors, from social workers to probation officers—many of whom require more paperwork.

■ **Value ESP's contribution to student achievement.** "I love seeing the kids every day and making them happy and healthy," says assistant cook Lynn Lenker. "We all feel we're their substitute moms while they're in school. We feed them, listen to problems, give them encouragement in making healthy decisions, wipe tears, clean up messes, and love them all!" ✔

For more on ESP developments in Delaware, go to the DSEA Web page at www.dsea.org. To contact Lynn Lenker, send an E-mail to lynnlenk1@cs.com.

Facts & Figures

The Steadiest Folks Around

On average, NEA's K-12 ESP members have nearly 11 years of experience with their current employer. This employment stability means that education support personnel really *know* their schools.

(Source: NEA National K-12 Educational Support Personnel Membership Study, 1997.)

Back Talk

When they say: "Food service workers don't need a union."

Think about this: "The first place a school district looks to cut money is the path of least resistance, which is non-union employees," stresses Lynn Lenker, president of the Appoquinimink Food Service Workers Association in Delaware. "Without a union supporting us, we would never have the respect, a voice in decision making, or benefits or pay increases we deserve."

AFSWA members, who organized last year, "now have representation, a binding contract—no more changing district policy—and, most importantly for me," Lenker points out, "liability insurance."

You never know when an accident might happen and you seriously burn a child with a hot pan," she explains. "If parents were to sue you for injuring their child, do you think your school district would pay for the legal fees and settlement?"

MORE TO THE STORY

Delaware Paras Push for Training

Helping make Delaware's $1,000 ESP raise possible last spring was the NEA state affiliate's 12-member Para Issues Committee, which initiated a successful community petition recognizing paraeducators' link to student achievement.

But winning that raise was only half the battle for paras.

"Last year, the state added two extra days for teacher professional development, but *nothing* for us," says para committee chair Barbara Morris. "Districts aren't providing training programs for paras, yet paras need to know how to set up disciplinary programs, manage classrooms, deal with technology, and work with students with special needs."

The committee has been meeting for over a year with state education department officials to hammer out a statewide para licensure program. But there's still more work to do.

Not content to wait around for professional recognition, the 110-member Colonial Paraprofessional Association in New Castle recently negotiated Delaware's first para professional development program, with extra pay for successfully completed training, along with two new para salary lanes.

Upon completion of training, Colonial's Level I paras receive a $750 salary adjustment, while Level IIs receive a $1,000 adjustment, for a total of $1,750 after both courses.

Morris, the CPA president, says the Level I training course, planned in cooperation with the district, was "wonderful," with lots of detailed presentations.

"We learned," she notes, "lots about communications skills, special education terminology, classroom management, and student behavioral goals." ✔

For more, contact Barbara Morris at colpara@prodigy.net.

HEALTH: Vermont now ranks first in the nation for children's health insurance coverage, with only 6 percent of kids uncovered. Texas and Arizona, both over 25 percent, rank last. For more: www.cdfactioncouncil.org/childrensdatahome.htm.

PREVENTION: Some 79 percent of the 11,000 children born every day in the United States are now immunized adequately. Four states in New England average near 90 percent. For more: www.nationalacademies.org/includes/shots.htm.

SAFETY: Three-quarters of the 170,000 playground injuries reported each year result from falls, but eight out of ten playgrounds, says a new study, still have surfacing that's too hard. For more: pirg.org/reports/consumer/playground2000/.

TEEN BABIES: The birth rate for teenagers is now at its lowest rate in the past 60 years, with just 50 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19. For more: www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/00news/00news/newbirth.htm.

RIGHTS WATCH

Protecting Student Privacy

Don't use students to grade classmates' work, a federal court warns.

In a decision that may change the way many teachers do their jobs, a federal appeals court has declared illegal the practice of having students grade each other's papers.

The U. S. Court or Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in Denver ruled last July that this common grading practice violates the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). That's a 26-year-old federal law that prohibits schools from disclosing to third parties a student's "educational records" without parental consent.

The school district subsequently asked the full 10-member appeals court to reconsider the ruling of the three-judge panel. The court voted 6-4 in October not to rehear the case, with four dissenting judges.

"Our teachers are overworked and underpaid now," noted the dissenting opinion. "What will happen to them when they can be sued by every irate parent or student claiming that someone saw a grade?"

The case began its way through the judicial process after Kristja Falvo, a mother of three students enrolled in the Owasso (Oklahoma) Independent School District, learned that several of her children's teachers sometimes used students to grade one another's work and to call out their grades.

When her complaints fell on deaf ears, Falvo sued the district and various administrators, claiming that the grading practice embarrassed her children. One of her sons, she said, even threatened to quit school after being ridiculed about his test scores.

"I felt very strongly about it," Falvo said. "I wish we would have been able to resolve this as concerned parents. I wish we didn't have to sue the schools."

The U. S. Department of Education sided with the school district. LeRoy Rooker, the director of the Department's Family Policy Compliance Office and the official responsible for enforcing FERPA, argued that the practice doesn't violate the law because the grades don't become educational records "maintained" by the school until after they're written down in the teacher's gradebook.

But the Tenth Circuit disagreed.

"Grades which students record on one another's homework and test papers and then report to the teacher constitute 'education records' under FERPA," the court concluded.

One aspect of the court's ruling gave teachers and administrators an important — but temporary — victory. The lawsuit sought to recover money damages, not just from the school district, but also from various school officials personally.

Under the doctrine of "qualified immunity," school officials—including teachers—can't be held personally liable unless the law was "clearly established" that what they did violated the plaintiff's rights.

Emphasizing that the Family Policy Compliance Office itself had advised school districts that the practice was permissible, the court held that the individual defendants in the case couldn't be held personally liable because the law was unclear at the time that the challenged grading practice violated FERPA.

"We cannot expect educators to more accurately interpret a law than that law's administering agency," the court said.

In the wake of this decision, however, teachers in the states that are covered by the Tenth Circuit can be held personally liable if they continue to use the peer grading practice, because the law is now firmly established in that circuit that the practice is illegal.

Nevertheless, Falvo isn't binding on states outside the Tenth Circuit, and even teachers in that circuit have several alternatives to avoid potential liability. (See sidebar.)

The school district has not yet announced whether it will appeal the case to the U. S. Supreme Court. It has until early January to decide.

The Tenth Circuit's decision in Falvo v. Owasso Indep. School Dist. can be found on the Web at www.kscourts.org/ca10/cases/2000/10/99-5130.htm. ✔

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

What Does the Falvo Decision Mean to Me?

That depends on where you live.

If you teach in one of the six states that make up the Tenth Circuit—Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, or Wyoming —you should not have students grade each other's work. The Falvo case says that's illegal, and you can be sued personally for money damages if you ignore that ruling.

You also shouldn't post or display student works that reveal grades or use non-school personnel (parent volunteers, for example) to grade student papers.

On the other hand, the Falvo court held that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act "does not prohibit students from correcting papers if done anonymously or with the consent of parents."

Obtaining parental consent is, of course, cumbersome, but you could assign students random numbers, so that papers are not personally identifiable.

You can also avoid trouble by having students grade their own papers, as long as they don't call out their grades. And there's nothing wrong with having students grade their classmates' work if the grades are not recorded in your gradebook—as, for instance, with practice tests.

If you teach in a state outside of the Tenth Circuit, you're free to continue having students grade each other's work. That's because the Falvo decision is not binding in any other circuit.

In an important recent development, LeRoy Rooker, the director of the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office, told *NEA Today* that his office still maintains its position that peer grading does not violate federal law.

Rooker added that his federal office will not find any school district in violation of the law for allowing peer grading.

There is one caveat to keep in mind. A school district may decide on its own to ban the peer grading practice, either because it fears litigation or believes it's harmful to students. In that circumstance, of course, you should comply with district policy.

—M.D.S.

THE BOTTOM LINE

DEMOGRAPHICS: Over the past two decades, the minority percentage of the nation's suburban population has nearly doubled, from 13 to 23 percent. Central cities are now 47 percent minority. For more: www.hud.gov/press-rel/pr00-133.html.

SMOKING: Florida's pilot anti-tobacco campaign has helped drop cigarette use among middle schoolers from 19 to 11 percent. Some 69 percent of kids have now never smoked. For more: jama.ama-assn.org/ issues/ v284n6/abs/joc00237. html.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: An estimated 1 million prekindergarten children are now attending public schools. Over 40 states are now funding prekindergarten initiatives, up from 24 in 1992. For more: www.ed.gov/pubs/schoolinvolvement/.

COMPENSATION: In 1960, the chief executives of major American corporations averaged twice as much in income as the President of the United States. CEOs now average 62 times more than the President. For more: www.ufenet.org.

INTERVIEW

John Wilson New Executive At the NEA Helm

NEA's new executive director offers a vision for the future of public education based on his own classroom experiences.

Paul Tañedo

When John Wilson comes on board this month as the top staffer at NEA headquarters in Washington, D.C., the nation will be watching. It's not every day, after all, that a national organization over 2.5 million educators strong brings on a new executive director. Wilson will be replacing the retiring Don Cameron, the Michigan teacher who has led the NEA staff since 1983. A former president and executive director of the North Carolina Association of Educators, Wilson likes to say that he's been an NEA activist since his days as an NEA student member back in the late 1960s. What's his vision for NEA? *NEA Today*'s Leona Hiraoka discussed that question with Wilson last month, before he assumed his new responsibilities.

What's your classroom background?
I've taught K through 12, basically with students who were either mentally handicapped, learning disabled, or emotionally handicapped. The labels change. Eventually, they'll figure out that we should stop labeling children, because you're never going to find a label that doesn't degrade the child.

I also ran a progressive discipline program at a middle school.

I don't believe we should punish children by denying them an education. Suspending students into the streets is giving up. But you can have zero tolerance for discipline problems if what you suspend students into is an alternative program.

To attract young people into teaching, you helped create the North Carolina Teacher Cadet program.
Yes. Students usually decide by the age of 14 what they're *not* going to be. So, in North Carolina, our NEA state affiliate has developed a program that offers an exploratory course at the middle school level and an honors course in high school.

These courses help give students an idea whether they'd like to become a teacher.

How can NEA help attract people into education?
I would love to see the Association serve as a catalyst for getting the federal government involved in a teacher cadet-type program. One of my interests, as NEA executive director, will be in seeing whether the U.S. Department of Education is open to forging a partnership with us on this.

How do we keep new teachers in the profession?
We have to connect teacher education with the real-life classroom. We need extended time for student teaching, so students have an opportunity to hone their craft.

We also need to provide mentors who truly have time to support new teachers. And we can't load up new teachers with extracurricular activities and non-instructional duties.

In North Carolina, we pushed for and passed a law that said you cannot assign an extracurricular activity to teachers during the first three—or last three—years of their teaching, unless they have requested this activity in writing.

Did you have a mentor when you started teaching?
When I started, I was assigned to the trailer that wasn't ready when school started. I had no books, no materials, no mentor. It was quite a learning experience.

What makes for good professional development?
NEA members in North Carolina have helped create the North Carolina Teacher Academy, which is absolutely the best professional development in the nation. We use national experts to train our trainers. And our trainers are real teachers who continually upgrade their skills.

Teachers who take courses at the Academy are compensated, and some critics have charged that teachers wouldn't attend if the state didn't pay them. I say, "Yes, they would participate without compensation, but, no, they shouldn't have to." If IBM can make professional development part of its employees' compensated work, why can't education?

What about professional development for education support personnel?
That's very important. All workers should be learners. If you think of custodians and their handling of chemicals, for example, then the need for training becomes instantly obvious.

Support staff should get paid for skills and knowledge they develop, and, at the work site, we need to make sure that everyone understands and values the work that support staff do. All staff have a stake in the development of children.

North Carolina has more teachers with National Board Certification than any other state.
Yes. In North Carolina, we provide lots of orientation and support. We've worked successfully in the legislature to have the application fee paid for teachers and to get teachers time off to complete the required portfolio.

I believe that, within 25 years, National Board Certification will be required, just as it is in the medical profession. We should plan for that. If you don't get involved, things can turn out quite differently than what you would have wanted.

What about salaries?
To improve student achievement, you have to improve teacher quality. To do that, you have to provide good salaries and good working conditions. They all go hand in hand—higher standards, higher salaries, better teacher quality, better student achievement. In North Carolina, we've raised salaries 54 percent. Somebody asked what I'd do when the teachers in North Carolina became the best-paid in the nation.

I'd then want to know what the engineers and computer technology people are making, I said, because I want teachers to be in the top 10th percentile of what we pay *all* professionals in the nation.

RESOURCES

- *For more on John Wilson, visit the Web at www.nea.org/nr/nr000908b.html.*
- Visit www.ncae.org for details on the programs that the North Carolina Association of Educators provides for its members.
- The Covenant with North Carolina's Children, a group that John Wilson and NEA's North Carolina state affiliate joined with other child advocate groups to create, advances public policy to promote the total well being of children. See www.ncchild.org/covhome.htm.
- For more on National Board Certification, visit the Web at www.nbpts.org and www.nea.org/teaching/nbpts/nbptsqa.html.

Teaching About Homosexuality

A new book helps dispel old myths.

Big misconceptions face those who teach about homosexuality, says **Arthur Lipkin.** Some people believe, for instance, that talking to kids about homosexuality will turn them into homosexuals or that talking about homosexuality means describing sexual practices.

But children do not become homosexual, points out Lipkin, a former English teacher now with the Harvard Graduate School of Education, because someone tells them about homosexuality.

And teachers routinely talk about heterosexual relationships in English and other classes without discussing sex acts, he adds. They can do the same for homosexual relationships.

Several new resources—including Lipkin's book *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools* (Westview Press)—are now available to help teachers discuss homosexuality in age-appropriate ways.

Why check these resources? Because, says Lipkin, between 5 percent and 10 percent of students are gay, lesbian, or bisexual and struggling to cope with the world around them.

Impact: Through the Massachusetts Safe Schools program, Lipkin has presented workshops to educators on gay and lesbian issues. When they become aware of how some students are suffering, they respond. "Teachers wouldn't be teachers if they didn't want to help kids," he notes.

For More: Check *Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth*, published by NEA and nine other organizations (www.nea.org/achievement/gayfacts.pdf). Contact the NEA Gay and Lesbian Caucus at SidBru@aol.com or Figel@aol.com.

Michael Quan

Arthur Lipkin

Milbrey McLaughlin

David Bacon

After-School Programs Boost Success

Young people who participate in community-based after-school programs achieve more and hold higher academic expectations, says **Milbrey McLaughlin,** *professor of education and public policy at Stanford University. Her report,* Community Counts, *details a 10-year study of 120 community organizations that offered after-school programs.*

What's the link that exists between after-school programs and student achievement?
Kids from stressed environments who participate in these programs on a high level are 26 percent more likely to report recognition for good grades and 20 percent more likely to rate their chances of graduating from high school and going to college as "very high."

How do these programs impact kids?
Whether they take the form of dance troupes, sports teams, leadership programs, or Boys and Girls clubs, after-school programs are activities that help students build skills and confidence. They're places with no questions asked, where attitudes and gang symbols have to be dropped.

And these programs address the many problems kids have in their lives within the context of a very caring, close, family-like community.

What's the difference between "gym and swim" programs and "intentional learning environments"?
Many organizations provide safe places and activities, but not quality content. Kids are the first to notice if they're not getting good sports or arts instruction.

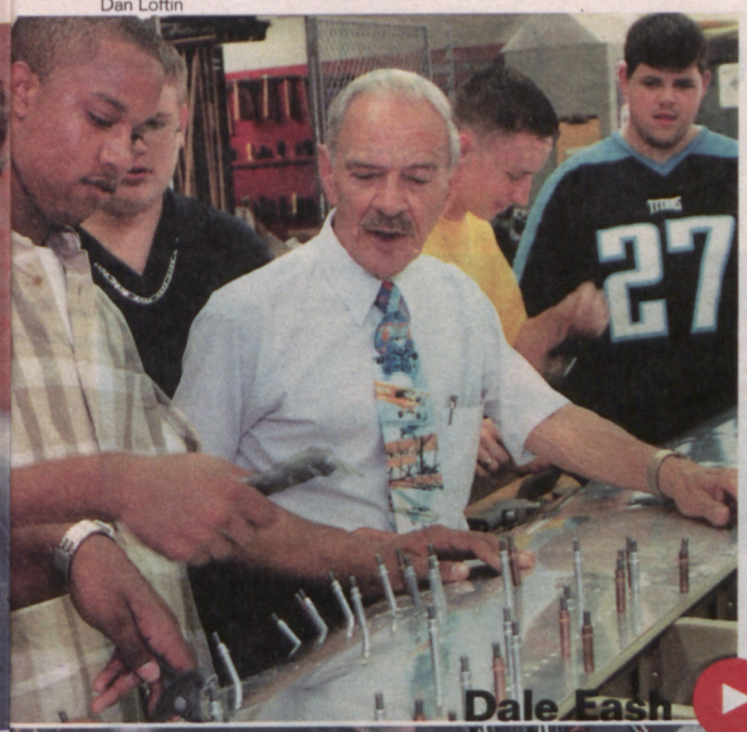
The more meaningful programs, the real learning environments, give youth a voice in the kinds of activities offered and involve them in planning and performance.

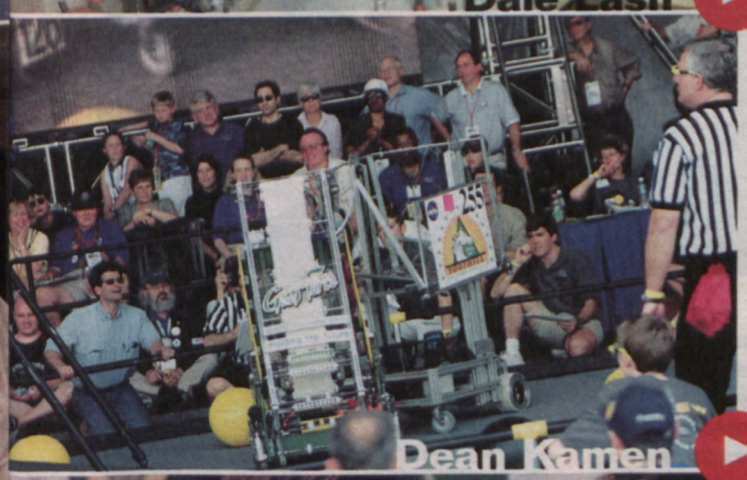
Another important aspect is personal attention. In intentional learning environments, there's an adult who knows each student and who can remark on the student's personal growth.

These environments provide examples of adults who are successful and connect students with jobs and futures.

For More: Find *Community Counts*, published by the Public Education Network, at www.publiceducation.org/pubs/. Contact McLaughlin at milbrey@stanford.edu.

Dan Loftin





Jodie Andruskevich

College Credits Take Off

Innovator:
Dale Eash

Job: Aircraft mechanics teacher, McGavock High School, Nashville, Tennessee

Bright Idea: Eash is the first teacher to receive Federal Aviation Administration approval for an articulation agreement between a high school and a nearby post-secondary institution, in this case, North Central Institute.

As a result, his students will get college credit and a jump start on mechanics certification in a region where aviation is booming.

"It's almost to the point where licensed mechanics can name their own price," says Eash.

To achieve such a unique standing with the FAA, Eash has demonstrated teaching techniques that have really taken off. His three aviation classes are now working full throttle to build a two-seat, single-engine, canopy-type aircraft from a kit donated by a local pilot.

Aircraft I students learn airplane basics and study shop safety, tools, and blueprint reading. They complete sheet metal projects in McGavock's state-of-the-art mechanic shop.

In Aircraft II and III, students use an engine manufacturer's manual as they disassemble, calibrate, and reassemble aircraft engines and learn about powerplant theory and application.

"To make it an outstanding learning situation, you need to be working on something," says Eash, a licensed pilot and aircraft mechanic who was recently named FAA's Aircraft Mechanic of the Year for Tennessee. "And an airplane is the ultimate thing."

Next Steps: Students may build the plane, but Eash will take the final exam two years from now—a fly-by in the plane at 200-plus miles per hour.

For More: Contact Eash at deash@bellsouth.net.

Science and the Super Bowl

Innovator:
Dean Kamen

Job: Founder of FIRST: For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, in Manchester, New Hampshire

Bright Idea: "You get what you celebrate," says Dean Kamen. "Our society celebrates sports, not science, and that's why kids don't pour their time and enthusiasm into science."

Kids get excited about sports, Kamen says, by seeing great athletes compete in events like the Super Bowl, not by viewing a museum exhibit on football.

So Kamen, pictured lower left, at ringside, created FIRST, a competition that combines National Football League sensibilities with Massachusetts Institute of Technology pedagogy.

In FIRST, school teams build robots to compete in specially designed games.

Businesses help by giving engineers paid time off to work with student teams.

"I wanted kids to see that the best scientists and engineers are just as cool and make as much money as sports figures," says Kamen, who runs DEKA Research & Development Corporation, a firm that designs medical equipment.

Kamen has little patience with businesses that try to tell schools how to educate.

"Why do they think they know how to run a school?" he asks. "If Coca-Cola had a marketing problem, would it ask a third grade teacher?"

FIRST, Kamen notes, isn't really about technology. It's more about inspiration and role models.

The program, for instance, features engineers who are women and minorities, as well as engineers who are young and love sports cars.

Impact: Last spring, about 18,000 students in some 400 teams from all over the United States (with one team from Brazil) took part in the FIRST competitions. About 20,000 fans cheered the championship teams in a specially built stadium at Disney World in Florida.

For More: Visit www.usfirst.org for details on how to get involved.

New Teacher Support Initiative Aims at 'Better Beginning'

Innovator: Marilyn Nagano Schlief

Job: NEA staffer working to promote quality teacher induction and mentoring

Bright Idea: One of the biggest challenges facing the teaching profession may be retaining more of the new teachers who are enticed into the profession—currently, only about 50 percent of new teachers are choosing to stay beyond the first five years.

"NEA affiliates have been clamoring for programs that welcome, support, and retain our colleagues who are new to the profession," says Marilyn Nagano Schlief, a former teacher and Michigan Education Association staffer who's now part of NEA's Teaching and Learning staff.

Research shows, notes Schlief, that effective teacher mentoring programs can help recruit and retain teachers in the profession.

"That's why NEA's New Teacher Support Initiative is helping local affiliates explore the power of effective mentoring programs," says Schlief.

Chief among the resources offered by the New Teacher Support Initiative is the publication *A Better Beginning: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive*.

This guide for NEA local affiliates interested in creating new teacher support systems focuses on teacher mentoring and provides real-life examples of successful programs.

The guide also provides insights into the challenges new teachers face today, lists the characteristics of an effective mentor, and includes a handy tool kit with sample surveys, sample contract language, and much more.

For More: A copy of *A Better Beginning: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive* was mailed to every local president in the spring of 2000. To view or download a copy, visit the Web at http://conference.nea.org/betbegng.pdf.

Learning Well by Doing Good

Service-learning meshes with academics at this California school.

"When will I ever need to use this in real life?"

That's a common cry from high school students bored with academic subjects. But those dreaded words are seldom heard by NEA member Nathan Ivy at Irvington High School in Fremont, California.

Ivy is the school's service-learning coordinator, and he works hard to make academic subjects more meaningful to students—by combining subjects with useful service.

That can make for some unusual projects:

- One class simulated a sweatshop shoe factory, with some students playing exploited workers, some the bosses, and others the union organizers.
- Four students investigated what could be done about a deteriorating situation at the local park, where 1,000 pounds a day of goose droppings were keeping people at bay.

Both projects generated practical results while engaging the students in more traditional classroom studies.

The sweatshop produced refurbished shoes for a homeless shelter. Meanwhile, the students learned about the history of work and the labor movement and wrote essays about who might have walked in the shoes they fixed up.

The goose investigation led to a campaign to improve the environment, with the investigation itself incorporating an array of learned math and science lessons.

Photos by David Bacon

Jacqueline Szeto, Jennifer Sewell, and May Mei worked to educate citizens who fed geese so much that bird droppings made the park unusable.

At Irvington High, one of 66 schools awarded a White House commendation for excellent service-learning curriculums in 2000, all students are required to put in 40 hours of service before graduation. They can make arrangements for the service on their own, but the school also provides plenty of opportunities for academics with practical applications.

"In the last four or five years," says Ivy, "we have really worked on overlapping the service with the curriculum and tying that to specific California state content standards."

For example, all ninth graders go out into the community to carry out a scientific investigation of a real-world problem. Working with Ivy and other school staffers, they then develop and

Idea Exchange

Parents in High School

I keep parents involved at the high school level by inviting them to my biology class to work with their child in lab activities.

This gives parents the opportunity to observe first-hand what their child is learning in class and, hopefully, opens a door of communication about school.

The visits also give me the opportunity to get to know the parents a little better, too.

The best reason for inviting parents to class? The students learn that their parents are really pretty sharp.

Catherine Ratliff
Oxford, Mississippi

Turn Into Ms. Frizzle

Here's a tip on how to look like Ms. Frizzle of *The Magic School Bus* without having to spend a lot of money on your wardrobe.

Cut out designs in felt (such as trees showing the four seasons, the water cycle, life cycle of a frog) and spray bonding glue on the backs. Let the glue set for at least five minutes. Apply the designs to an old apron, and you're Ms. Frizzle!

The designs can be removed and stored on waxed paper, so one apron is sufficient for all your science needs.

The children will love it and will be able to guess what you'll be teaching next.

Anne Craighead
Roanoke, Virginia

Hanging Student Work

I have painted cinder block walls in my classroom, and I found that charts stay on the wall better with hot glue than with stick tack.

To display student work, I hot glued clothespins to the wall in alternating rows. I glued my students' names above the clothespins.

Changing displays of student work has never been easier, and the pins lift right off the wall when I'm ready to remove them.

Leah Keith
Cullman, Alabama

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Fax it to *NEA Today* at 202/822-7206 or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org. For more tips from NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit a tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

execute a plan for dealing with that problem. Through reports and journals, they develop their English skills.

One group of students, "the Geese Brigade," set out to learn why the local geese population was growing.

The culprits, they discovered, were people who feed the geese through the dry months, when natural food is scarce, causing the geese to stop migrating and attracting passing flocks.

Each goose, the students learned from park rangers, produces about a pound a day of waste. The students wrote an elaborate report filled with graphs and photos to document the worsening conditions.

The Geese Brigade then gave out flyers to educate offenders. Most goose feeders, students reported, accepted the leaflets, but some "were annoyed and irritated." Children, the students added, were very responsive "and highly appreciative of the junior park ranger stickers we rewarded them with."

"Service-learning gives kids a sense that what they know and can do is real."
—Nathan Ivy
service coordinator,
Irvington High School,
Fremont, California

Besides what they learned on the academic front, the brigade students learned just how difficult it can be to tackle real-world problems.

"Canada geese are very interesting and they have a very complex lifestyle very similar to humans," one brigade student wrote in her first journal entry. Two months later, she concluded her journal with, "I never want to see a goose again." ✔

—Alain Jehlen and Julie Leupold

For More:
Visit the Irvington Web site at www.irvington.org, or contact Ivy by E-mail: nivy@fremont.k12.ca.us.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do when a student is sick and can't go home or to a nurse's office?

When a child in my class gets sick and we cannot get in touch with anyone, and there is no nurse's office, I set the child up in the back of my room with bean bags and pillows. More than likely the child will fall asleep until someone can come, or until the end of the school day.

After school, I am sure to take home the pillows to wash, and I disinfect the bean bags for the next child who needs them.

Christine Bom
Elementary school teacher
Wilmington, North Carolina

■ When I taught kindergarten, I would store several clean beach towels in my classroom. If I had a child who was sick and couldn't get home, I would have them rest on one towel on the floor and cover them with another.

I'd then take the towels home, wash them, and bring them back for the next time they were needed.

Jim Roney
Elementary technology teacher
Tampa, Florida

■ I used to teach in a latchkey setting. When an ill child came to my program and I couldn't reach a parent, I'd bring out an old cot of mine and a blanket. I also kept several stuffed animals on hand for just such an emergency — the younger students were comforted by lying with them.

Matthew Yuhasz
Middle school teacher
Columbus, Ohio

■ I've found the best way to handle this problem (and it *is* a problem) is to allow the child who is not feeling well to wash his face and hands in cold water. Regardless of what is wrong—temperature, headache, tummyache, good old homesickness—cold water can't hurt, and it will often help. This also gives the child a little one-on-one attention.

Pat Brooks
Elementary resource teacher
Selmer, Tennessee

■ When I worked in special ed, we had a student who had seizure problems. The parents couldn't come and get him each time he had an episode, so we set up a quiet, cool corner with subdued light. This allowed him to come out of his spell and progress back to normal (he was quite tired after these spells).

In regular ed, I had a first grader whose parents didn't seem to make it when they were called. He was sick for two weeks. We set up a cot next to the office and had a pail in the room if he needed it, and towelettes for him to clean his face.

Sherry Kunz
Elementary resource teacher
Selmer, Tennessee

■ What a sad situation for a sick child, not being able to go home! A teammate of mine had this happen to a young man in her room. She placed several rug samples in the back corner of the room, made a pillow out of his jacket, and encouraged him to rest. He was able to listen to the lesson until he fell asleep.

Jane Ragains
Fifth grade teacher
Dover, Delaware

■ First, you pray that the student doesn't have anything contagious. Then you do the best that you can to make the student comfortable until the regular dismissal time.

Study the symptoms well. If the student is very sick, a doctor may have to be called. Better to be extra cautious than have a serious emergency go unheeded.

Mazie Lewis
Elementary school teacher
Columbia, South Carolina

Got an Answer?

What do you do when students' late work hours damage their school performance?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by regular mail or fax at 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a new *NEA Today* mug!

To Mexico, in Search of Roots

North Carolina teachers visit the homeland of a growing number of students and return with some unexpected lessons.

Chris Seward

Victoria Greene-Epps discovered new ways to connect with her Hispanic students after a trip to Mexico with other educators.

North Carolina English teacher Victoria Greene-Epps traveled to Mexico last summer, and brought back a lot more than tourist shots. She came away better prepared to engage her Hispanic students in learning.

Just one example: In teaching about the Native American experience, Greene-Epps used to take the "Pocahontas approach"—and reference only Native Americans from the continental United States.

"I was limited," she explains, "to the Native Americans I knew about."

But on her trip to Mexico, Greene-Epps found herself introduced to fascinating new native cultures from the rest of the Americas—the Mayans, Aztecs, and more. These Native American experiences are now part of her lesson plan.

And that's piqued the interest of her Hispanic students at J.F. Webb High School in rural Granville County, because many of them descend from these peoples.

"I've seen my kids come to life," notes Ivalee Keen, another North Carolina teacher who visited Mexico this past summer.

"You can see the pride on their faces," adds this fifth grade teacher at Walkertown Elementary School in suburban Winston-Salem, "when I talk about the smart Aztecs and the brilliant scientific achievements of the Mayans."

Greene-Epps and Keen were among 20 North Carolina teachers who took a 12-day journey to Mexico this summer organized by the Duke University-University of North Carolina Program in Latin American Studies.

The teachers learned, to their surprise, that not all Mexicans speak Spanish. In the state of Oaxaca, notes Maria Bonito, a French and Spanish teacher at Leesville Middle School in Raleigh, students speak 64 dialects of 14 different Indian languages. Many of the poorest students are learning Spanish as a second language.

In Oaxaca, the visiting North Carolina teachers were also treated to a slice of life they didn't have back home: a village square.

"The square was a wonderful gathering place for socializing after school or work, with ball-playing, balloons, music, dancing—there was a lot going on," said Janice Cole Gibson, a social studies and language arts teacher in Oakboro.

"I'd heard Hispanic students say there's not much to do in North Carolina," Gibson adds. "Now I understand why."

On their trip, the North Carolina teachers—all from communities experiencing a surge in Hispanic enrollment—saw kids in a wide range

How I Did It

Donald Woytowick
Fifth grade teacher
New Milford, Connecticut

I became concerned when I realized that there aren't a lot of workshops for elementary teachers in science and math. So I created professional development workshops to provide K-5 teachers with new ways to teach these subjects.

It's too often the case that students get turned off to math and science before they're really exposed to what these subjects are all about.

The Planets, Light and Sound, Electricity, Fractions, Data Collection and Measurement—these are just some of the professional development workshop topics I offer.

During each workshop, I cover about six different hands-on activities. We go over background information on the topic, management procedures for each lesson, assessment activities, and extension ideas for interdisciplinary activities.

After the paperwork is completed, it's time for the hands-on part! In the Electricity workshop, for example, teachers explore how an electrically charged object affects other objects. Participants experiment with a bulb, a D cell, and a large paper clip to make the bulb light.

Then a simple circuit is built to use as a conductor tester. The teachers build a simple switch to conduct the flow of electricity and test different materials to determine if they're con-

Jonathan Olson

of living conditions, from tin shacks with no running water to modern homes with backyard pools, computers, and videogames.

The trip was "the most inspirational thing I've ever done in my life," says Keen, whose enthusiasm wasn't dampened despite a fall that had her leaving Mexico in a wheelchair.

"You can see the pride on their faces when I talk about the smart Aztecs and brilliant Mayans."

—Ivalee Keen,
Fifth grade teacher

Keen is now planning to write a curriculum and edit a videotape about the trip.

Greene-Epps feels equally inspired. In past years, she had difficulty reaching and motivating some of her Hispanic students. Now she feels that a door has opened, just because she went to Mexico.

One girl, impressed by the photos and crafts Greene-Epps brought back from Mexico, brought into class her own pictures of Veracruz, her family's original home. That sharing, says Greene-Epps, was a sure sign she had connected.

The student, says Greene-Epps, now "gives 100 percent plus to her school work."

—Alain Jehlen

For more:
Visit www.duke.edu/web/las/outreach.html. E-mail Victoria Greene-Epps at vgreeneepps@hotmail.com, Ivalee Keen at ikeen@msn.com, and Janice Cole Gibson at wandrnlady@aol.com.

ductors or insulators. The participants then construct circuit breakers and learn their function as part of the circuit.

This is a fun and often new experience for the workshop participants, and, by doing the activities themselves, they better understand the material and can teach it more effectively.

The lessons can be made interdisciplinary. Student interest in electricity can be sparked by reading *The Magic School Bus* and *The Electric Field Trip*. Geometry can be linked to art by having students create a quilt out of triangles.

Science and math are at the core of the new Information Age we're living in. That being the case, it's imperative that our students learn the basics of these subjects while their creative minds are still fresh and eager for stimuli.

"Real Teachers. . . know how many times you can reuse a manila file folder before it's worthless."

—Andrew Kiser, special ed teacher, Winchester, Virginia

[DILEMMA]

How do you handle disruptive students?

We all have those students in our rooms who make it their mission in life to disrupt the teaching and learning process. I believe they do this because they see us as teachers, not as individuals.

When the school year begins, I identify these students quickly and purposely seek them out for casual conversations, mostly at sporting events, lunch time, in the hall, and when I see them in the community.

These students begin to see me as an individual who is interested in their lives, not just a teacher. I rarely need to send students to the principal, and the teaching and learning process can continue without interruption.

Bruce Denney
High school social studies teacher
Seymour, Missouri

■ When I have students who are disruptive, I work from the premise that they have forgotten the rules. I say things like, "Oh, you forgot that we have a rule about running in the halls." Or "Now that you remember, I'm sure you won't do it again."

If the behavior continues, I look at it as an opportunity to learn a new skill and have them come in at recess to practice following the rule correctly.

Laura Bleck
Third grade teacher
Lakenheath, England

■ The class rules need to be made together, signed by each student, and posted.

Always maintain your serenity before the class.

Pick the kid who needs the most help with control first.

Remove the child from the group and talk privately — "privately" is the key word.

Explain you care for the student but will not tolerate the behavior.

Make sure to set up standards of acceptability.

With little children, a tiny mark on the board and a nod in their direction reminds them of the consequences.

With great luck, the next in line for help may have adjusted their actions.

The three keys to success: calmness, private talks, and rules made with the class.

Marian Brovero
Retired elementary teacher
Waldwick, New Jersey

■ When faced with a disruptive student, I have to remind myself of an adage: "Children need love the most when they deserve it least." This helps me focus on the behaviors and never respond in anger that could rob children of their dignity in front of their peers.

I make sure to catch disruptive students doing what they *should* be doing—and give positive comments. Time and energy spent here pay off.

During a disruption, I may appear to ignore it until I can quietly ask the child to step outside. There, I immediately discuss how the situation could have been handled differently.

When disruptions occur frequently, I contact the parent and suggest daily communication. This can be in the form of a checklist or something as simple as a red card for a bad day, yellow for a fair day, and green for a good day.

Darlys Preslar
Fourth grade teacher
Clayton, Missouri

Got an Answer?

What do you do with colleagues who constantly put down good ideas?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax at 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

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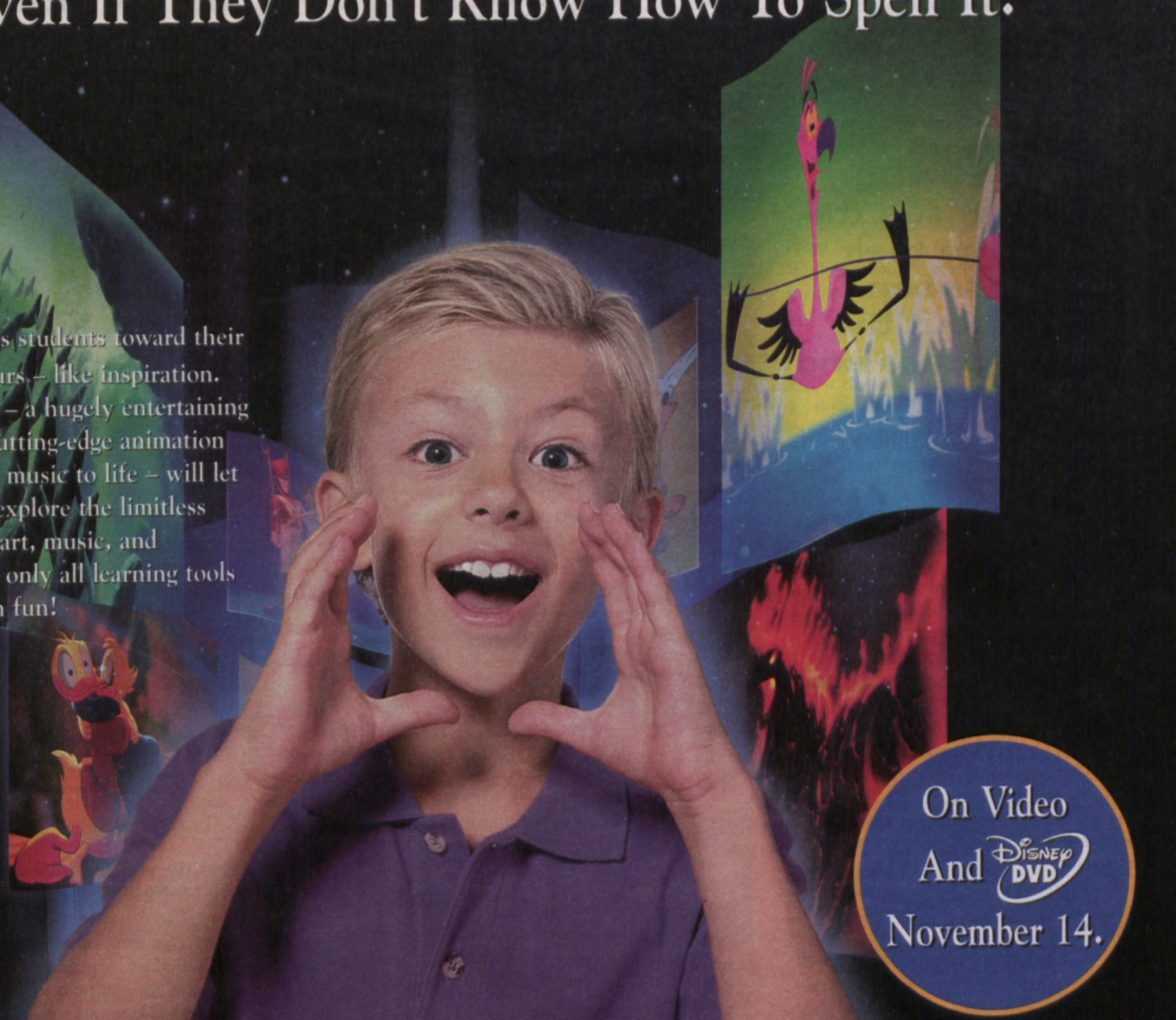
Ted Pitts

They'll Say *Encore*
Even If They Don't Know How To Spell It!



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* Limit one (1) rebate per individual or address. **Offer good, and purchases must be made, between November 14, 2000, and February 28, 2001, in U.S.A. only. All entries must be postmarked by March 14, 2001.** Void where prohibited. Store receipts must emanate from same state as consumer address. Group entries void. Rebates will not be mailed to P.O. boxes. Check with your local post office for a street address. Rebate rights may not be assigned or transferred. Requests not in compliance with all the terms of this offer will not be acknowledged or returned. All submissions are subject to verification. Use of multiple addresses or P.O. boxes to obtain additional rebates may be fraud and may result in prosecution. This form and proof-of-purchase tabs may not be reproduced in any manner and must accompany your request. Warning: Reproduction, purchase, sale or trade of proof of purchase is prohibited. Fraudulent submission could result in federal prosecution under mail fraud statutes. Cash redemption value 1/100 of 1¢. Any requests for offer forms mailed to this P.O. box number will not be acknowledged. Offer good in U.S.A., APOs and FPOs only. Void where prohibited, restricted or taxed by law. Please allow 6-8 weeks delivery. Inquiries regarding this offer received later than 6 months after the expiration date will not be acknowledged. Walt Disney Home Video assumes no responsibility for lost, late, misdirected, mutilated, illegible, incomplete or postage-due mail. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. Walt Disney Home Video distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Burbank, CA 91521. Printed in U.S.A.

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Walt Disney HOME VIDEO Disney DVD

Engaging Older Students in 'Reading for Understanding'

A new resource helps educators improve the more advanced reading skills needed by middle and high school students.

In middle school or high school, a student who knows only how to read individual words does not meet the definition of a "good reader." At the secondary level, a good reader needs to be able to question, summarize, clarify, and predict, based on the material that's been read.

But, as many secondary educators know, not all students come to their classes equipped with these reading abilities.

That's why the new book, *Reading for Understanding: A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms*, is so important.

In its pages, educators can explore how to help adolescents connect what they already know with the new information that awaits them in a text.

The authors, a team of researchers and secondary classroom teachers, explain clearly how educators can help students take control of their reading and become aware of where and why understanding breaks down.

The basic approach is simple. Teachers serve as master readers to demonstrate the cognitive strategies of questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. Then the tables turn, and students practice these strategies out loud through in-class exercises.

Educators who are familiar with the concept of reciprocal teaching will recognize elements of this technique, since both lead students to explore what they know about what they know.

Reading for Understanding is published by the National Council of Teachers of English, but it offers ideas that can be incorporated into virtually any subject area, without adding new curriculum. ✔

For more:
To order *Reading for Understanding* from the National Council of Teachers of English ($22.95; $16.95 for NCTE members), send an E-mail to orders@ncte.org or call 800/369-6283. For more on reciprocal teaching and other reading topics, log on to NEA's Reading Matters Web site at www.nea.org/readingmatters.

Literary Flights in 2001

More than 25,000,000 people participated in NEA's celebration of reading last March 2, and we expect more this coming March. Dr. Seuss's book *Oh the Places You'll Go!* is the new NEA theme for Read Across America 2001. Oh, the possibilities! Across the country, we'll challenge readers to visit their favorite places. We'll read mile by literary mile! And will we succeed? As Dr. Seuss said, "That's 98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed!" Watch this "Cat Box" for more ideas. And log on to www.nea.org/readacross.

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HOW TO . . . BUILD A MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY

November marks Native American History Month, and National Children's Book Week is November 13-19. To honor both, Joseph Bruchac—Abenaki storyteller, publisher, and children's book author—shares his thoughts on enriching your bookshelf with multicultural works.

Why the need for multicultural literature?
Children need every kind of role model that is appropriately available. Our children come from an incredibly wide range of backgrounds and have many different ways of experiencing the world. We need to read and experience, with authenticity, things that come from their point of view to be a fully rounded human being.

What do you mean by 'authenticity'?
Sometimes books are written by people who imagine a world they've never lived. As a result, we get books full of factual errors, stereotyping, and pictures that are not helpful to anyone.

How can you discern a book's cultural authenticity?
Look at the sources cited and the acknowledgments made by the author. It's important to get a clear and detailed citation—if that's missing, be suspicious.

If you come across a story that is described generically as "an African story," for example, instead of being tied to a specific tribe or region, you should question its authenticity.

Unfortunately, even today, we see books with pictures of other cultures that are the equivalent of Italians wearing kilts and speaking with German accents.

How can educators develop a multicultural library or reading list?
Make a list of the finer writers out there, and make it a class project to write and ask for their recommendations. Contact publishers who have catalogs and a variety of resources, such as Lee and Low Books: (www.leeandlow.com).

I strongly recommend the *Multicultural Review* as a source for reviews and interesting articles. And it's incumbent upon librarians to read regularly such publications as the *Small Press Review*, which looks at the diversity of publications out there.

For more: E-mail Bruchac at nudatlog@earthlink.net or visit www.greenfieldreview.org. His two picture books, *Crazy Horse's Vision* (Lee and Low) and *Squanto's Journey* (Harcourt Books) have just been released. Visit www.Nativeauthors.com for more on the North American Native Authors Catalog, which specializes in works by American Indian writers.

Michael Greenlar

What did I do all day? I picked up some awesome nose rings downtown, had soccer practice, ate way too much candy, and then met up with my friends to get a ride to the concert, which was ok, but our seats were really high. You know, Mom, the same old stuff.

[now read every other line]

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START READING BETWEEN THE LINES.

Your kids live active lives. Maybe too active. Which is why you need to be involved – and listen carefully. Sometimes what they're not saying is as important as what they are. Find out what they're really doing for fun, especially after school; meet their friends, keep track of their social lives, and set reasonable boundaries. These are all ways to show your kids you love them, and help keep them away from drugs. To learn more, call 1-800-MetLife for a free booklet in English and Spanish, *How To Be A Better Parent.*

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www.metlife.org

Why Aren't Girls More Tech Savvy?

Girls blow off the high-end computer culture because it doesn't incorporate their interests. How—and why—the computer culture needs to change.

In 1998, the American Association of University Women report, Gender Gap, *revealed that while young women are taking math and science classes in almost equal numbers to young men, they're lagging behind in participating in computer science classes and pursuing technology-based careers. A two-year commission subsequently looked into the issue of gender technology and teacher education, and the findings were released recently in the AAUW report,* Tech Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age.

Do girls approach technology differently than boys do?
Girls are certainly using the Internet and E-mail as much as boys. But differences show up at advanced levels: Girls aren't going as far in computer science, programming, engineering, and information technology majors or careers.

Why the breakdown?
According to the *Tech Savvy* report, girls in general have little interest in a computer's speed, how technology works, or programming. They're less interested in the machine for the machine's sake than they are in advancing things that they're already interested in—solving problems, communicating with their friends, finding information.

What about educator attitudes toward technology? How do these affect what's going on in the classroom?
"That's the hidden story in the discussion," says Pamela Haag, AAUW's director of research.

"A majority of educators are women," notes Haag. "In our online survey of 900 teachers, we found that teachers have some of the same concerns and legitimate skepticism about the use of computer technology in the classroom as girls do."

Many teachers want to know whether technology can help them teach—be it English, art, history, or math. But they remain unclear on what technology is really supposed to do in the classroom.

Many feel they're expected to use technology in sophisticated ways when it isn't really clear how they can get training or support.

"Virtually all the teachers we surveyed believe that technology is here to stay, but they have a range of opinions about whether or not this is really good for the classroom," says Haag.

Teacher concerns are often met with criticism, notably that teachers just aren't able to handle the new technology. AAUW's Commission on Technology, Gender, and Teacher Education, which prepared *Tech Savvy*, notes that teacher concerns need to be addressed, not derided—and that educators themselves should be designing instruction that takes advantage of technology across all disciplines.

What changes are needed to make education more tech-savvy?
"A shift more toward content and less emphasis on the technical would be important, to have computers serve as more than just high-tech blackboards," says AAUW's Haag.

Schools of education and school districts also need to support professional development for school staff that helps educators use computer technology creatively across the curriculum.

So how do we "educate girls in the new computer age"?
We need to take girls' criticisms seriously—and start incorporating lessons on how computers can help us solve problems, how it changes our social relationships.

"If students are exposed to computers in areas that already interest them," says Haag, "they may get more involved than if the focus is on learning about the history of technology, programming language, or how the machines work."

Girls also need to be educated on the many options available in technology fields.

In AAUW focus groups, girls have declared that they have little interest in pursing information technology careers because they perceive that these careers involve spending all day sitting in front of a screen.

The image of the computer nerd, in other words, lives on vividly in their minds.

In fact, all sorts of opportunities for tech-savvy women are out there, and many involve human interaction, problem solving, sales, and marketing—and go far beyond sitting in front of a computer all day.

Why should the field of high technology change for girls, instead of the other way around?
For one, because the AAUW study found that girls today are confident enough to say, "We can do this, we're just not interested." They're going to change the culture, not change for it.

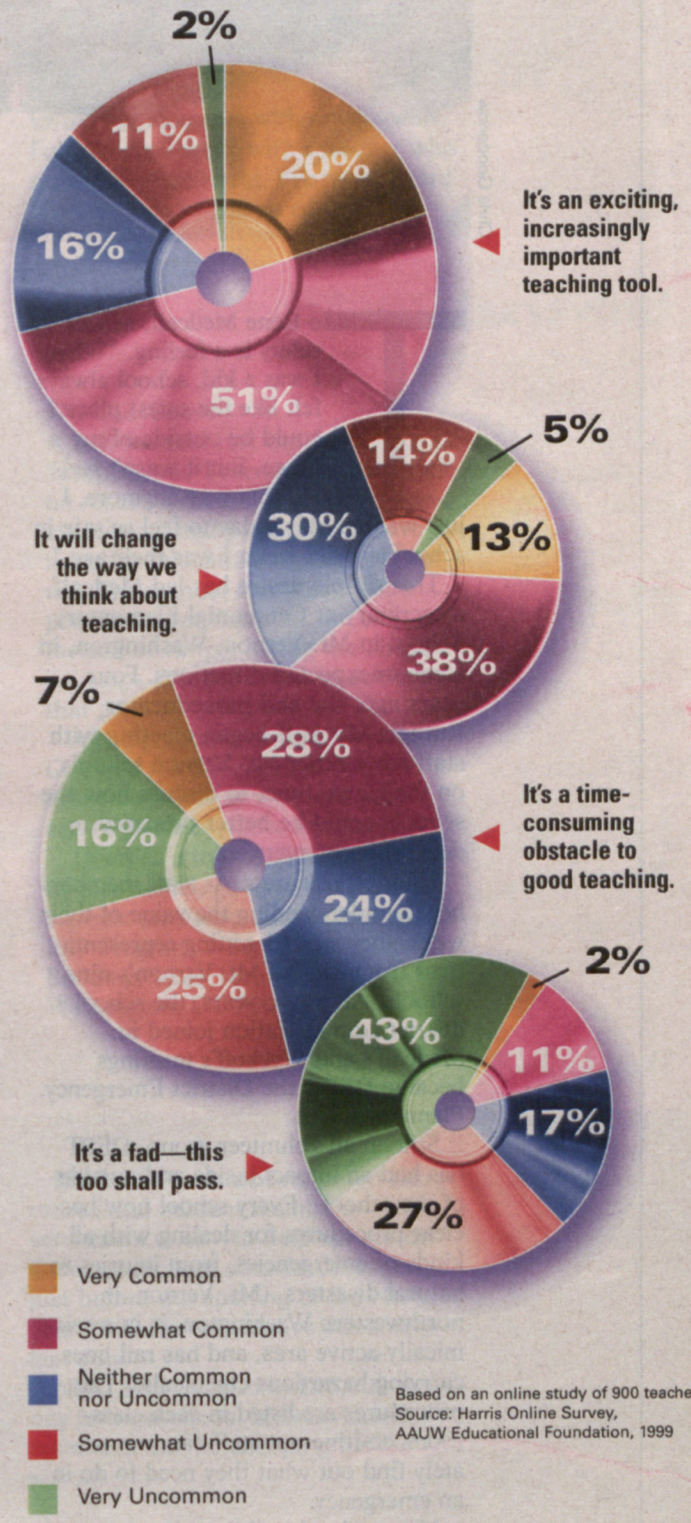
But if the technology culture and today's girls don't find common ground, future employment opportunities for girls will be closed off.

"The fastest growing jobs for the next two decades will involve computer engineering and programming and design," notes Haag. And if girls aren't attracted to these fields today, they may be shut out tomorrow. ✔

—Michelle Y. Green

Order *Tech Savvy* ($12.95) from the American Association of University Women, 800/225-9998, www.aauw.org. Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships, from the AAUW Educational Foundation, award from $1,000 to $9,000 to teachers working on issues involving girls and education. Application deadline: January 10, 2001. For information, visit www.aauw.org.

What Teachers Think About Technology



Based on an online study of 900 teachers.
Source: Harris Online Survey, AAUW Educational Foundation, 1999

TEAMWORK

ESP Take the Lead on School Safety

School staff focuses on being prepared for all emergencies.

Chris Goodenow

Rene Medcalf, left, and her colleague, Rutheia Wyckoff, were instrumental in drawing up a school district-wide plan for safer schools.

To Rene Medcalf, school safety is a feeling. "When I was a kid, school always felt like the safest place I could be outside of my home. But it wasn't feeling that way anymore. I just wanted kids today to feel as safe in school as I did when I was their age."

This simple desire has led Medcalf, a secretary at Centennial Elementary School in Mt. Vernon, Washington, in some unexpected directions. Four years ago, she and paraeducator Rutheia Wyckoff began meeting with staff from other Mt. Vernon schools, on their own time, to discuss how the schools could be better prepared to deal with emergencies.

Their efforts grew. As staff members began understanding the value of their work, they started getting representatives from each of Mt. Vernon's nine schools. After two years, the school district administration joined in. Medcalf's and Wyckoff's meetings became DEPT, the District Emergency Planning Team.

Still an all-volunteer group, DEPT has had an impact inside and outside of the schools. Every school now has clear procedures for dealing with all kinds of emergencies, from injuries to natural disasters. (Mt. Vernon, in northwestern Washington, is in a seismically-active area, and has rail lines carrying hazardous chemicals.) The procedures are listed in each classroom, so itinerant staff can immediately find out what they need to do in an emergency.

Many school buildings have started using photo ID badges for staff, so kids can easily identify "safe" adults. And DEPT coordinates three emergency drills each year throughout the school district. DEPT members regularly attend emergency management training sessions in their county and in Seattle.

Beyond school, DEPT has become an integral part of the county's emergency planning system, along with police and fire departments, the Red Cross, and other public and private agencies.

Every school has a person trained to be a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) member, prepared to do search and rescue, administer first aid, and set up an emergency command center in the school in disaster.

Mt. Vernon schools are also Red Cross emergency shelters. As Medcalf points out, "We already have the most people in one place who need to be taken care of" in the event of an emergency. One of her goals is to find corporate sponsors so they can station a trailer containing 72 hours of emergency supplies at each school.

Medcalf's activism is not confined to safety issues. This 15-year employee is co-president, along with fellow secretary Teresa Litke, of the new, 40-member Mt. Vernon Educational Support Association (MESA), which represents the district's clerical employees.

"The secretaries talked about organizing for 20 years, and we finally decided it was time to do it," she says. MESA just finished negotiating its first contract. Medcalf has high praise for the support the clerical employees received from the Mt. Vernon teachers and from Washington Education Association UniServ Director Phil Becker: "They were always helpful, and they never made us feel dumb."

Medcalf and the other DEPT team members are now exchanging information with people from other schools around Washington.

They are learning from some districts, and teaching others. "We're not here by ourselves, we're here together," she says. ✔

Going the Extra Mile

Last May, Angie Dykema, Michelle Chamberlain and June Stansbery, all members of the Vergennes ESP unit of the Addison Northwest Teachers Association, ran across a small item in the Vermont-NEA newsletter that piqued their interest.

NEA was offering ESP Technology Grants—ranging from $250 to $3,500—to help ESP members apply technology in projects that could benefit their locals, schools, or communities.

But there was a problem: They only had two weeks before the application deadline.

"We'd never written a grant application before," says Chamberlain. But inexperience didn't get in the way of a great idea!

They made the deadline. A few weeks ago, they learned they had

TEAM PLAYER

Getting To Know Us

Name: **Sue Caron**
Job Title: education technician
Background: Last March, Caron wrote a full-page article for an issue of the *Maine Educator*, the publication of the Maine Education Association.

In the article, Caron told about her workday and week. We think she expresses the sentiments of many ESP, so we've reprinted a portion of her commentary here.

What I do: I spend 175 days teaching, caring, counseling, mentoring, and parenting.

On average, I work 40 hours a week, but I only get paid for 35. Some days, I may teach 75 percent of the time.

I get paid to attend one day-long workshop. There is no holiday time and no storm day pay. There are no summer wages. Some techs need two jobs to make ends meet.

Other duties: I'm a moderator for the student council.

My lunch times and recesses are reserved for coordinating student council projects. I've forgotten what a 25-minute lunch break is. I take five to 10 minutes, maybe. I'm with the students from the time the school day begins up until I do my daily bus duty at dismissal time.

Impact: In the hearts and minds of my students, I've left some gentle footprints and so have they. I'm here, involved, loving the moments with my students. Fortunately, I work with a teacher who treats me as an equal. I've never heard her say, "You're just an ed tech." ✔

The Maine Educator

Education technician Sue Caron has been helping kids learn for 11 years. She works at Pettengill School in Lewiston, Maine.

RESOURCES

Making Our Schools Safer

Increasingly, school districts are looking outside for information about making schools safer.

Here's a source. *Classroom Killers? Hallway Hostages? How Schools Can Prevent and Manage School Crises* is a new book by Kenneth S. Trump, president of the National School Safety and Security Services, a consulting firm specializing in school security and crisis preparedness.

The book, which should be of value to anybody involved in school security planning, lays out practical steps for preventing school crises, and for dealing with them if they happen.

It is available in paperback ($23.95) or cloth ($49.95) from Corwin press at 805/499-9774 or www.corwinpress.com.

Web Sites for Work

If you've ever tried to locate specific information from a United States government agency, you know how frustrating that can be. The Internet is a great source, but where do you start? Well, here's a breakthrough.

The people in Washington have consolidated things so that now you can one-stop-shop at a new portal on the Internet. Go there and find links to more than 20,000 government sites. Have a look at www.firstgov.gov.

Another site to tap for all-purpose information on education topics from kindergarten through 12th grade is www.eduhound.com.

The site (in Spanish and English) includes an offer for a free newsletter, along with the site's pick for the top Web site of the week.

Off the Shelf

A new manual just out from NEA's Teaching and Learning unit focuses on results-oriented job descriptions, evaluation, and professional development for education support personnel. The manual analyzes what a person accomplishes in the end instead of simply listing the checklist steps that are taken to achieve that goal.

A companion brochure, *Results-Oriented Job Descriptions for ESP*, is available online at www.nea.org/esp/resource/rojobdes.htm.

To order a free copy of the brochure or the manual, go to www.nea.org/esp/resource/esppubl.htm or write to ESP Program, NEA Affiliate Capacity Building, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

been awarded a grant of $3,400.

The money will buy a computer and digital camcorder for documenting and promoting events around Vergennes Union High School.

Washington state bus driver Jamie Rhoten has won seven regional school bus safety and driving competitions in recent years.

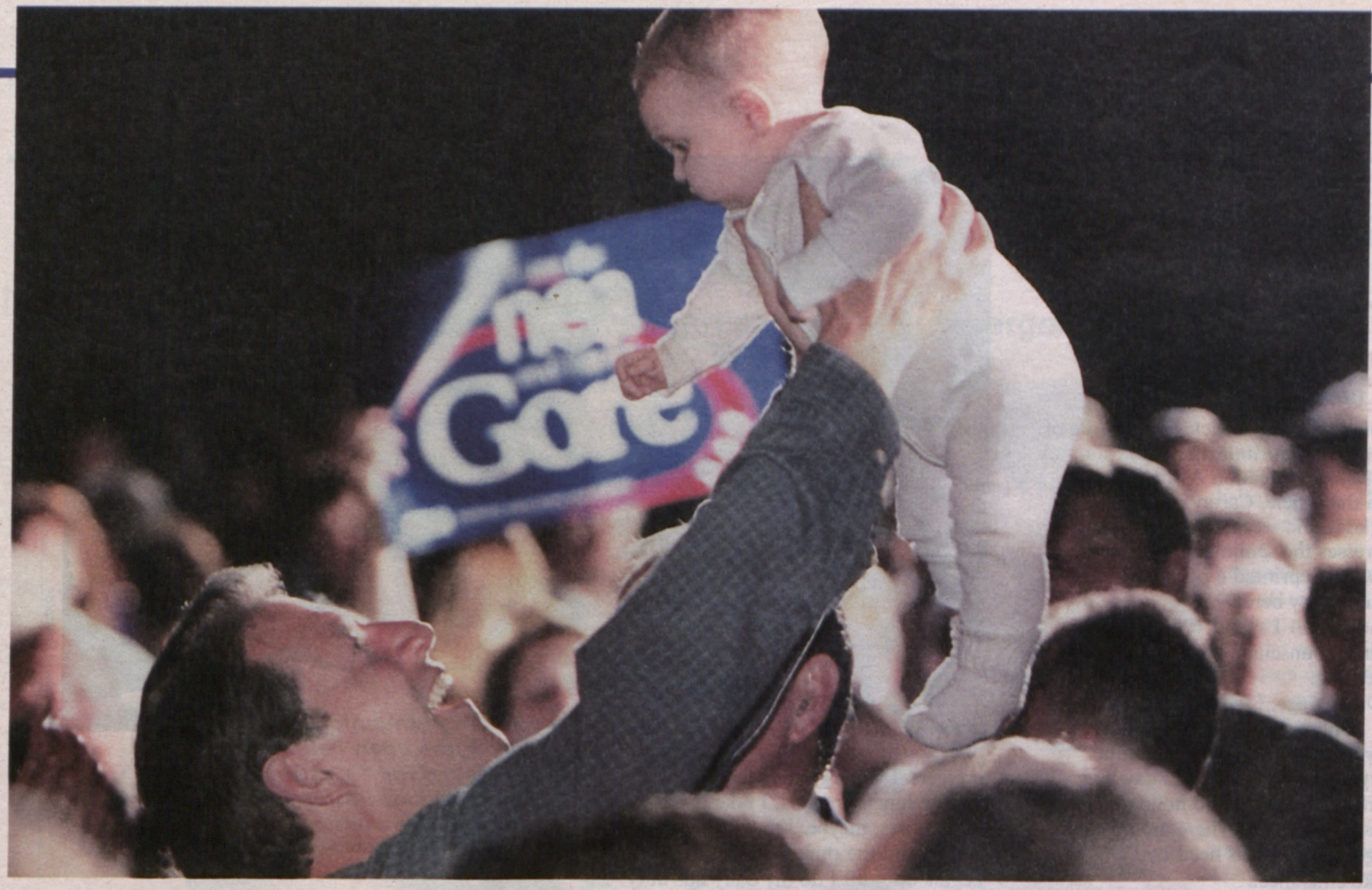
To win, you've got to negotiate an obstacle course with 10 different driving challenges, complete a written test on state laws and regulations, and identify the defects on a rigged school bus in only 10 minutes, explains Rhoten.

In one obstacle course event, he says, drivers must drive along a 100-foot line of tennis balls with only a two-inch clearance.

Try that in your minivan.

NEA ESP members joined NEA retired and student members—185 volunteers in all—to help spruce up Calumet School outside Chicago just before the opening of the NEA's year 2000 Representative Assembly last July.

NEA also chipped in $25,000 to pay for new blinds, bulletin board materials, and landscaping for the school.



Al Gore's Plan To Strengthen America's Schools

Universal Pre-School

▲ Al Gore has proposed investing billions of dollars from the federal budget surplus to fund universal pre-school for all children over the next 10 years.

More Teachers

▲ Al Gore will create the 21st Century Teacher Corps, providing $10,000 hiring bonuses for young people and $10,000 bonuses for mid-career professionals to join the teaching profession.

New and Modern Classrooms

▲ Al Gore's plan calls for $25 billion in increased state and local spending for school construction, repair, and modernization.

Better Paid Teachers

▲ Al Gore understands that if we want to attract and retain the most talented teachers, we must pay them salaries that compete with other professions.

No Private School Vouchers—*Ever*

▲ Al Gore fundamentally opposes using any federal money for private school vouchers.

Expanded Head Start

▲ Al Gore's plan would expand Head Start to enroll at least a million children by 2002.

Internet Access

▲ Al Gore's plan puts new technology in every classroom and not only modernizes buildings, but makes sure every child has access to the Internet.

Higher Education

▲ Al Gore will continue his leadership by creating a national tuition savings program that would allow families to invest money in tax-free accounts that can be used in any participating state.

Al Gore: Proven leadership for children and public education.

Vote Tuesday, November 7th.

This message is from the National Education Association.

Learning

Nature: In Sight and Sound

Netscape: Naturesongs Digital Recordings from Nature!
Back
Forward
Reload
Home
Search
Netscape
Images
Print
Location: http://www.naturesongs.com/
What's Related
Naturesongs.com
These pages provide samples of various natural sounds, promote nature recor
and archiving, and provide a library of sounds that people can refer to when
hear something new. Naturesongs.com also licenses its copyrighted sounds a
supplies custom audio files to individuals and businesses for educational, so
effect, commercial and personal use.
Search Naturesongs' Pages | Equipment & Techniques Page | North American
Sounds
Costa Rican Bird and Animal Sounds | Other Animal Sounds | Human Sounds
Insect Sounds | Misc. Sounds | CD/Tape, Book and Birdy Stuff Sales
Telinga Microphone Sales | Other Bird, Sounds, and Environmental Links
Plants of the Verde Valley & Sedona | Use and Licensing of Sounds
Nature Recordists' e-Mail Group | E-Mail me:

California fourth grade science teacher Julie Barbour uses the Naturesongs Web site and several others to help her students understand and appreciate nature.

Sights and Sounds of Nature

I work with home independent study students, providing weekly small group/classroom experiences in science for fourth to sixth graders.

We did an owl pellet investigation activity, and I located several sites which greatly enhanced our work. We were able to hear three different barn owl calls at www.naturesongs.com (a wonderful site for many types of animal, bird, and insect sounds). An investigation data sheet and study questions can be found at www.ceismc.gatech.edu/zooary/zoo/tidbit/owl.html.

A set of comprehension questions concerned with predator-prey interactions is located at http://users.nac.net/jmele/Tyto.pretest.html.

Finally, we were able to view the results of owl pellet investigations from other students and get ideas on how to display our own results at http://bend.k12.or.us/cascadems2/Johnson/owlpeltlab.htm (click on "photos"). There are numerous other sites with great information on protecting these important raptors, including directions for building nesting boxes!

Julie Barbour
Teacher/science specialist
Chico, California

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wired-classroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to NEA Today, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling NEA Today mug!

And Now, the News

Increasingly, schools around the country are offering video production and television broadcasting classes to their students. From small daily newscasts to sophisticated, state-of-the-art film productions, more and more schools are embracing this technology as a way to strengthen communication, build self-confidence, and increase media literacy skills.

As far as we know, the students of Aviara Oaks Middle School in Carlsbad, California, produce the only live middle school news program in the country to be broadcast each week on the Internet.

And to help other schools design their own television broadcasting programs, this school has introduced a new Web site filled with information, tips, and resources. The address is: www.studentbroadcasts.com.

Whether your budget is small or large, this site has all the information you need to get your school programs up and running!

Doug Green
Aviara Oaks Middle School
Carlsbad, California
dougteach@aol.com

Help With History

There's a valuable resource designed to help world history teachers tap into the power of the Internet.

It is called Historylink101.com, a site that divides each culture/time period into six main categories: art, biographies, daily life, maps, pictures, and research.

Currently, the cultures of Egypt, Greece, Mesopotamia, and Rome are complete with links to sites that complement a world history curriculum.

The site is designed for easy use in your class. Each link and lesson is number coded for easy identification and use.

In addition, Historylink101.com has several other excellent resources for history teachers. Resources include: a bank of Internet-based lessons, art history lessons from a World History perspective, history of farming in ancient cultures, and headline news articles from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and more by country and region.

In the works are resources on such topics as art history up to the 1900s, farming history to the current day, an Indian Village picture tour, and descriptions of Mandan Indians. Also being developed are some Early Man link pages.

Eric Rymer
World history teacher
Norton, Ohio

My favorite Web site

I've created a math page where students can find organized, easy-to-understand help with algebra. There are explanations, examples, and practice problems with hints and answers. Go to: www.homestead.com/stroh/mathpage.html.

Eric Stroh
Math teacher
Owings, Maryland

Bytes for Beginners

My students are turning in various assignments that sometimes make use of music saved in something called the "MP3 format." I've been told that this is a violation of copyright. Is this true?

First, let's define MP3. MP3 stands for MPEG Audio Layer-III. MP3's compression capabilities are the single most important factor in the new digital audio phenomenon. MP3 files are compressed to about one-tenth the size of CD audio files without quality degradation.

So, for example, some of the tunes your students may be including in their presentations may have come from a CD that someone across the Net purchased and copied for distribution over the Net. CD audio files are about 10 million bytes (digits) of data per minute of music. The average music CD can hold about 12 songs. The same CD can hold up to 120 tunes if they're encoded as MP3 files!

Now to the more difficult question: Is downloading MP3 files a violation of copyright law? Specifically, as far as MP3 music files go—yes and no. The laws around exactly what is and is not permitted under the latest Digital Millennium Copyright Act are still being interpreted in courthouses across the country.

The sole act of downloading MP3 files is in violation of copyright law when both the person who is downloading the data does not own the original piece being downloaded and/or the person downloading the file intends to use it in some sort of public display or performance.

An after-school event is considered a public performance event.

But there is, to date, no precedent for the same work being displayed in the classroom.

That said, the legal details are far beyond the scope of this article.

The best reading on this subject is *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* by Bruce Fries.

A Decade of AIDS Awareness: What Have Students Learned?

Schools have traditionally played a major role in providing health education to young people. So when the need to educate about HIV/AIDS emerged, public schools quickly came to play a major role. Here's how, as two NEA Health Information Network staffers explain.

Tammy Smith

How widespread is HIV/AIDS education in schools today?

With government and community support, the percentage of students who've been taught about HIV/AIDS in school has grown, since 1992, to 90 percent.

Have these programs made a difference?

Absolutely. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that young people are changing their behaviors in ways that reflect the prevention messages they're being taught.

Comprehensive school-based programs have been shown to delay the initiation of sexual intercourse, reduce the frequency of intercourse, and reduce the number of sexual partners young people have.

Since 1991, the number of high school students who have had sexual intercourse has decreased from 55 percent to just less than half. The number of high school students who report using a condom during their last sexual intercourse has increased to almost 60 percent.

How has HIV/AIDS education changed in the past 10 years?

School systems and their communities continue to limit the types of information that can be provided during an education program targeted at youth—most are allowed to cover only safer-sex practices and the use of condoms.

But we are seeing one significant new development. There are now more peer educators and youth-to-youth educators. A young person trained as a peer educator can be a very effective way of getting vital, pertinent information to students.

Another development: parent education programs, such as the *Can We Talk?* program offered by the NEA Health Information Network.

These programs teach parents how to talk with their children about difficult subjects and offer resources to help parents get information for themselves and their children.

How has the education effort affected the spread of HIV/AIDS?

During the mid-1980s, the epidemic was growing at a rate of 80 percent a year. Since then, comprehensive prevention efforts, including the education campaign in schools, have stemmed this growth dramatically.

Another aspect of a comprehensive approach that is slowing the spread of HIV: perinatal prevention programs that identify and treat pregnant women who are HIV infected, greatly reducing the transmission of the disease to babies.

So does that mean the epidemic is over?

No. There still are some 40,000 new infections each year in the United States. Internationally, the virus is spreading. In Asia and Africa, nations are reporting that as much as 35 percent of their population is infected with HIV.

But it's easy to see why some folks are feeling complacent. New—but expensive—medications are helping people with HIV/AIDS live longer, happier lives. And some people have been working on AIDS/HIV for well over a decade. They're just burned out on the issue.

Another problem we face is the mindset of many young people in the United States. As a group, students feel immortal, despite the reality that kids are getting infected every day.

We need to rekindle our efforts to educate the general public. And part of that effort is expanding prevention education in our schools.

—Robert Kaiser and Ariane Lopez
NEA Health Information Network

RESOURCES

- ***Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Sex and Character*** by Pepper Schwartz, Ph.D., and Dominic Cappello (Hyperion). Everyone agrees that parents must talk to their children about sex, but the questions always arise: How do I start? What should I cover?

  Ten Talks offers advice on exactly how to begin and what to say—not just about sex, but about safety, character, peer pressure, ethics, meeting people on the Internet, and the mixed messages delivered by TV.

  Ten Talks is based on innovative and proven approaches that the authors are using in parent workshops across the country. The talks can be adapted for many different types of families, helping parents to prepare their kids for the complex world of relationships, sex, and growing up. For more information, visit www. tentalks.com.

- ***World AIDS Day Resource Book.*** World AIDS Day is observed each year on December 1 to increase AIDS awareness and strengthen global efforts to address the AIDS epidemic. The American Association for World Health coordinates efforts for World AIDS Day in the United States. They have released *The World AIDS Day Resource Book* to help educators and community activists plan awareness activities. Included are fact sheets, sample press releases, and activity ideas. $4 plus $3 s&h (adjusted for larger orders). For more info or to order, visit the Web at www.aawh worldhealth.org, call 202/466-5883, or E-mail staff@aawhworld health.org.

- ***Can We Talk?*** or ***¿Conversamos? Can We Talk?***, an interactive workshop series from the NEA Health Information Network, helps parents to enhance their role in the health and sexuality education of their children.

  This fall marks the release of *¿Conversamos?*, a Spanish-language adaptation of the *Can We Talk?* curriculum that has been carefully adapted both culturally and linguistically to work with members of all Spanish-speaking communities.

  The family activity book ($10), planning and training manual ($60), and video ($5) can be ordered on the Web at www.canwetalk.org. To order, call 800/229-4200.

Zen and the Art of Biking

For this NEA member, regular exercise all started with a high cholesterol reading 10 years ago. His doctor prescribed exercise. So Steve Sliwinski hit the road, on his bike.

Steve Sliwinski, the sole secondary art teacher for northern Pennsylvania's Troy Area School District, started his biking a decade ago with short, five-mile treks.

But, soon enough, Sliwinski found himself rising at 6 a.m. to commute through 11 miles of rural farming area called the "Endless Mountains."

"The routine has provided me a good physical workout and sense of well being," says Sliwinski, "and lowered my cost of transportation!"

Biking has also dropped his blood pressure and resting pulse, lowered his stress level, and helped him control his weight.

Sliwinski's round-trip commute lasts about 90 minutes and takes him through mountain and valley terrain.

"Elevation changes of 1,800 feet sure add to the workout," he notes.

"When I arrive at work, I'm mentally charged and full of energy," says Sliwinski. "I keep extra clothing at the school, where a shower facility is available."

Over the years, Sliwinski has shifted into high gear. He's co-founded the Tour De Shunk, a highly rated 102-mile ride through mountainous locales—the total climb is 5,000 feet—that donates all profits to cancer research.

But it's on his original morning rides that Sliwinski finds a real sense of peace and centeredness.

"The commuting to work has become a quality-of-life feature in my life," he says.

Sliwinski, who teaches everything from metalsmithing to ceramics, likes the peaceful transition that his biking helps him make to and from work. The biking can also, he adds, help enhance the opportunity to reflect and prepare for daily lessons.

"I tell people that cycling is like a Zen experience—all the senses become fully engaged," says Sliwinski. "It helps me appreciate and value the experience of being alive."

Sliwinski also views cycling as an important part of the teaching and learning process.

Maria Strinna

"Like it or not, we are role models for our students," says Sliwinski. "In my role as a teacher, I see a great many children who see little benefit in physical activity. Perhaps, in some small way, my cycling can help show them a better way."

Getting Geared Up: Easy Steps

1. Know your limits. If you're a novice rider, begin by gradually increasing your endurance and distance over a period of time. Unconditioned muscles, placed under uncommon stress, are slow to recover.
2. Get a check-up. It's always a good idea to see your doctor before beginning a physical routine. A check-up also provides a baseline you can chart your progress by.
3. Know your bike. Attending a basic bike handling skills class can save you from "road rash." You can also obtain valuable advice from a local bike club or bike shop, online, or in books and periodicals.
4. See and be seen. In the dark or dusk, wear reflective clothing and have a 45-watt headlight, rear strobe flasher, and rearview mirror. Always be aware of traffic ahead and behind you. During daylight hours, wear bright colored clothing for easy visibility by drivers.
5. Ride within the law. Cyclists need to realize that they're riding a vehicle and subject to many of the same laws as automobiles. Cyclists should ride predictably and with the flow of traffic. Signal your intentions to motorists and always yield to traffic.
6. Understand basic maintenance. Do you know how to change a flat tire or replace a chain that has come off the front ring? You can learn a lot from local bike advocates, cycling organizations, and from reading. Be prepared. Carry an extra inner tube and a patch kit. Bike tires are more susceptible to flats than car treads.
7. Be prepared for the weather. The right kind of clothing will allow you to ride comfortably even on the coldest of days.

Quick Tips

Sameta Rush

"When biking, pay attention to the shorts. Padded shorts can bring comfort to the most sensitive, tender part of your core, and when it's happy, you'll be happy. There are lots of cycling shorts besides the lycra, show-it-all style. Terry, a cycling company for women, markets a "skort," a combo short and skirt. Pearl Izumi makes touring shorts that are comfortable and functional.

"Spend a few dollars on gloves and pad the hands. The cushion will reduce the jarring on the wrists, elbows, shoulders, and neck. If you have wrist problems, check with your local bike shop on a suspension fork and padded handlebar tape.

"Mount a water bottle cage on your bike frame or use a water carrier bag, such as a Camelback. Hydration will keep you feeling good, and it's a good way to squirt a friend."

—**Sameta Rush**, a competitive cyclist and triathlete, teaches fourth grade and video production at Strawberry Park Elementary School in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

NEA HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ Help Kids Identify Their 'Anti-Drug'

Help students identify that something special in their lives that stands between them and drugs—sports, art, family, or friends. The *What's Your Anti-Drug Partner Participation Pack* offers seven activities designed to encourage youth to speak out about alternatives to drugs. The activities can easily be incorporated into the classroom or afterschool or other youth programs. NEA is an active participant in this campaign. To request your free pack, E-mail nea@aed.org. To learn more, visit the Web at www.WhatsYourAntiDrug.com.

■ 5 A Day Adventures

The "5 A Day Adventures" Version 2000 CD-ROM encourages children to eat between five and nine servings of fruit and vegetables a day. This interactive CD, designed for children ages 5-10, introduces nutritional theories through an animated program. Single or multiple quantities are free to educators who send a request on school letterhead to Dole Food Company, 5 A Day Adventures, P.O. Box 6059, Oakland, CA 94603-0059.

■ Asthma and Air Quality

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has published a new resource, *IAQ Tools for Schools: Managing Asthma in the School Environment*, that clearly links the indoor environment and asthma. This guide discusses common asthma triggers in schools and suggests actions for asthma management. For a copy, call 800/438-4318.

■ Valentines for Cancer Survivors

The Cancer Rose of Hope classroom kit includes a lesson plan on cancer and materials for assembling silk rose pins. Students can assemble pins, attach their own messages to cancer survivors, and deliver the pins to hospitals or cancer survivor programs. For more, check www.usa rosebuds.com, E-mail USA Rosebuds@chicago.avenew.com, or call 708/957-0072.

And the Grammy Goes to. . .

A choral music teacher experiences the thrill of her teaching career.

Trippett/Sipa

As a dedicated College Park, Maryland, music teacher with 35 years in the classroom, **Betty Scott** thought little of Grammys and Academy Awards.

But that all changed last February, when Scott floated across the stage of the 42nd Grammy Awards in Los Angeles to accept the award for best choral performance.

"I was so euphoric, I didn't even hear my name," says the University Park Elementary School teacher. "What an incredible experience."

The Grammy was for Scott's work with the Maryland Boys Choir, an all-star group that she helped found.

In 1995, the choir sang Latin portions of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*—along with the Washington Chorus and Orchestra—at a sold-out Kennedy Center performance celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

National Public Radio recorded the performance, and the Washington Chorus released it, in 1999, to incredible fanfare.

Now Scott—along with her co-director and the conductor of the adult chorus, who also received Grammys for the performance—is a voting member of the Academy.

That might be a good thing, considering Scott currently directs a children's ensemble group that, over the years, has lent more than 150 of its young voices to several Grammy-nominated children's recordings.

Scott also continues to grow one of the capital area's most accomplished school music programs.

"Every year the parents panic that this will be the year I retire," smiles this NEA member. "The other day I received a letter from a former student, who's now 40 with two children of her own. She told me how much she had enjoyed my class and asked if I remembered when we used to sing 'Bye Bye Miss American Pie' in miniskirts." ✔

Kerry Huller

Getting Her Prime-Time Fame

"The CBS Early Show" knows people are interested in people. That's the premise behind the network's popular Friday segment called "Everybody Has a Story"—profiles of everyday Americans who are picked at random from the phone book, videotaped for a day, and shown to the rest of the country.

Last year, **Janet McAteer,** a school nurse at Centennial Junior High School in Casper, Wyoming, was one of those everyday people.

"I got a call from the show saying they had picked my name out of the phone book and asking if would I be interested in letting camera crews into my life for a day," she says. "I honestly thought it was a joke, until CBS's Steve Hartman came knocking on my door with a camera man behind him."

CBS taped McAteer at school and at home, for nearly 15 hours, and also interviewed several of her students and their parents. When the 10-minute segment aired several weeks later, McAteer was pleased with what she saw.

"I was thrilled that school nursing got some publicity because it's such an important job," says this veteran nurse. "The piece reflected the emotional aspect of the work and proved that being a school nurse involves so much more than putting Band-Aids on scrapes."

Viewers were touched, as well.

"Because a good portion of the segment focused on how I had been helping one young man whose mother had died, hundreds of people contacted our district asking how they could help him," McAteer points out. "For the attention the program directed toward this boy, and the millions more like him, I am thankful." ✔

Better Than Bowling

In 1989, **Earl Ziemann**—then 26 years old—was reaching his "prime" in the bowling world. He ranked 33rd in the world, traveled the nation, and earned a living playing the sport he loved.

That's when Ziemann says he did what any sensible person would do: He quit. Today, this former bowling sensation teaches U.S. history at Marina High School in Huntington Beach, California.

Now in his fifth year, Ziemann shares his experiences as both a professional athlete—and as a hard-to-reach high school student—with his own students and their parents.

Ziemann tells them about leaving his small Wisconsin town at age 19 to pursue a professional bowling career in California. He tells them about his seven years on tour and about the most important lesson he learned along the way: the value of education.

"During my final year on tour, I couldn't help but notice that many of the top bowlers, once they passed their prime in their mid-30s, had very few options, because they didn't have an education," he says.

So Ziemann left bowling to pursue a college degree and earn his teaching certificate.

"I would probably be the last person that my high school teachers would have expected to become a teacher," he says with a laugh. "I'm proof that education gives you choices." ✔

Bob Riha, J r.

Mike Munden

Teaching's Real McCoys

In nearly a combined century of teaching, **Emma** and **Lottie McCoy** have seen a lot—nearly all of it in distant lands. From Pakistan to Bermuda, the two sisters have traveled the world over, learning exotic languages, exploring new cultures, and advancing the educational experiences of children in overseas United States Department of Defense schools.

Lottie, left, now retired at the age of 82, set out to teach elementary music in 1954 after seeing recruitment ads in the local newspaper. Why did she leave her home in Columbus, Ohio, for the great unknown?

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," Lottie chuckles.

Lottie and Emma have taught in almost every setting imaginable. In Ethiopia, they held classes in a converted house. In Japan, they set up in trailers. Whatever the facility, the sisters always made sure their kids had the latest American texts.

"Everyone," says Emma, "believed in helping each other."

Emma is currently teaching in Okinawa, Japan. She followed her sister overseas in 1957 and has taught composition and reading skills to children ever since.

"I keep teaching because I really enjoy children," she says. "They keep me young." ✔

Dean Shalhoup

Not Just for the Sport of It

Baseball fans, take heart: Juiced-up baseballs are not behind the increase in homeruns hit this past season.

That's the finding that comes out of NEA member **Jim Sherwood's** work as part of the Mechanical Engineering department at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

Since 1995, Sherwood and his students have worked with Major League Baseball and the NCAA—testing bats and balls.

Earlier this year, the university's Baseball Research Center—which, under Sherwood's direction, has become the official testing center for college and professional baseball—was asked to figure out why 15 percent more baseballs were flying out of parks this year than last.

"Fans were alleging that the balls were being 'juiced up' to increase interest in the game," says Sherwood. "The majors wanted statistical data to address these accusations."

Over the course of months, Sherwood and his students tested nearly 200 baseballs for speed and consistency. They used hitting machines, white ash walls (simulating wood bats), and some good old statistical analysis.

Their findings, released in June, pleased everyone.

"All of the baseballs met specifications," he says. "It's not the baseballs that have changed—it's the players, who work out more, and this obviously affects their strength." ✔

Stories by Dina S. Gomez

A High-Stakes Debate

An urban school pioneer slams state tests and offers an alternative.

WILL STANDARDS SAVE PUBLIC EDUCATION?
By **Deborah Meier**
Beacon Press, 104 pp., $12,
www.beacon.org/spring00.html

If anyone in America can claim success in helping low-income children get an education, it's Deborah Meier, former head of the Central Park East School in New York's East Harlem and now principal of the Mission Hill School in Boston.

During 25 years of leadership at Central Park East, Meier developed a community where children were held to high standards. Many went on to do well later in life.

So Meier's views of the standards movement carry authority. She's no backseat driver.

This short volume is particularly useful because Meier's case—for high standards, against high-stakes tests—is followed by responses from seven education leaders who represent a wide range of views. They include testing advocate Abigail Thernstrom, school reformer Theodore Sizer, and NEA President Bob Chase.

Articulate people can often make a powerful sounding case for their side in a debate, but the test is how that side stands up to opposition.

The schools that Meier has led are public schools of choice, operating within the framework of the New York and Boston school systems, with union contracts, certified teachers, and the same per-pupil funding as other public schools, but with considerable freedom to plan their own programs.

Her schools are small, deliberately so, to let teachers and students get to know each other. Students take the usual standardized tests, but the standards and assessments that really count are developed at the school.

These schools succeed. Over 90 percent of her students at Central Park East graduated and went to college, and Meier says the students did far better in their future lives than their SAT scores would have predicted. Those students got something out of their education that wasn't on the test.

What's the winning formula? Schools that are small enough to form communities and gain student buy-in. Faculty that set exacting standards for effort and mastery—and make decisions for the school, in the process acting as compelling role models.

High-stakes tests, Meier argues, will weaken these schools.

"What kid, after all, wants to be seen emulating people he's been told are too dumb to exercise power, and are simply implementing the commands of the real experts,?" she asks.

Among the responders, Abigail Thernstrom, a member of the same Massachusetts Board of Ed that created the testing program that Meier is battling, takes the first whack. State testing, Thernstrom contends, is forcing public schools to teach illiterate students to read.

Bob Chase doesn't agree with Meier that each school should set its own standards, but he agrees that state standards won't magically transform students into high achievers.

That, he says, requires trained teachers, small classes, and adequate resources.

Chase's comments, and those from several other responders, come across more like friendly amendments to Meier than opposition.

Meier's real antagonist is Thernstrom, who essentially believes that low-income children don't learn because teachers don't make them.

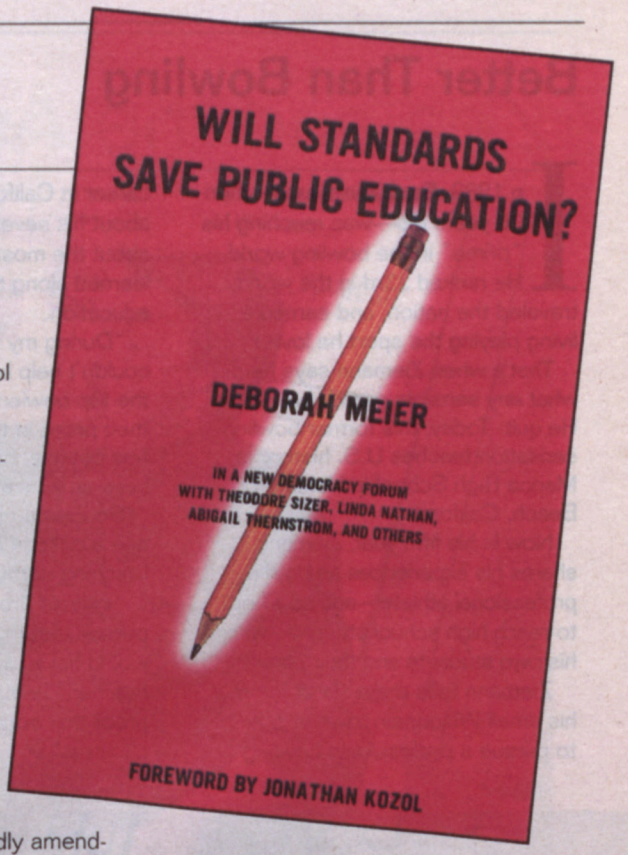
"No excuses" is Thernstrom's battle cry. By that, she doesn't mean legislators should stop making excuses for allowing thousands of children to live in rat-infested slums, without health insurance or decent child care when their parents go to work.

She means teachers should stop making excuses for not bringing these children up to the test scores achieved by children of privilege.

Thernstrom accuses Meier of asking society to trust its educators. And indeed she does.

Meier's retort? Her experience proves that "schools can make a difference, can alter the odds" for low-income children. But not if teachers are powerless. ✔

—Alain Jehlen


WILL STANDARDS SAVE PUBLIC EDUCATION?
DEBORAH MEIER
IN A NEW DEMOCRACY FORUM WITH THEODORE SIZER, LINDA NATHAN, ABIGAIL THERNSTROM, AND OTHERS
FOREWORD BY JONATHAN KOZOL

EXCERPT

"In the past two years, the number of students expelled from elementary and secondary schools in Chicago has nearly doubled. Expelled kids get sent to something called 'safe schools,' run by for-profit organizations. When a reporter asked Chicago officials why the number of spaces in the for-profit academies was far smaller than the number of expelled students, the reporter was reassured: 'Not to worry. They don't all show up.'"

TVTIPS

Animated Epics: Beowulf

HBO Family,
December,
Check Local Listings

This animated presentation tells the story of the epic struggles of the great 6th-Century Scandinavian warrior who faced three mortal enemies: the monster Grendel, Grendel's vengeance-seeking mother, and a fire-breathing dragon.

The War in I Corps
By Richard A. Guidry
Vietnam veteran Richard Guidry tells the story of what it was like on the battlefield, as a young Black Marine from Texas. Currently a history teacher at Highland High in Palmdale, California, Guidry offers a vivid and relentless depiction of his experiences in the so-called Demilitarized Zone with the northern I Corps. 238 pp., $6.99 plus $5.50 s&h from the Ballantine Publishing Group, 400 Hahn Rd., Westminster, MD 21157, 800/733-3000.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Comic Relief

Take a light-hearted approach to the struggles of school life with *The Little Giant Book of School Jokes*. Covering every subject from English to math, homework, classmates, and silly sports nonsense, this silly book will tickle your funny bone. $6.95 plus 5 percent s&h from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016, 212/532-7160.

Learning History Through Drama

This collection of 20 short plays offers a fun and active way for students to become familiar with United States history. From the U.S. Constitution to America in the Last Half of the 20th Century, Bowman's scripts cover numerous American icons and significant time periods in our nation's history. Based on researched historical fact, these plays can be used for an introduction to a lesson, its closure, or as a catalyst for discussion. 165 pp., $24.95 from J. Weston Walch, Publisher, P.O. Box 658, Portland, Maine 04104-0658. Also available at www.amazon.com.

Life on the Brighter Side

Gifted children tend to show signs of their talents at a very young age and need encouragement to develop their natural talents. Help children reach their potential with *You Know Your Child Is Gifted When...* This little handbook provides practical answers to question you may

have ranging from "What does 'gifted' mean?" to "How can I build my child's self-esteem?" $10.95 plus $4.95 s&h from Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 217 5th Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55401-1724, 612/338-2068.

Books for the Brainy

Lowell House Juvenile Books has a series of new books for gifted and talented kids, ages 6 to 8. *Brain Games* aims at developing critical and creative thinking skills through a series of tricks, riddles, puzzles, and other brain teasers. $5.95 plus $5 s&h from NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 W. Touhy Ave., Lincolnwood, IL 60712, 800/323-4900.

Better Education Through Partnerships

Teachers and other school staff need everyone's support if we're to encourage our youth to succeed in education and build a better future. *Challenge Young Minds* is a brief yet informative pamphlet that gives helpful hints about how everyone can help improve our schools. Visit the Education Excellence Partnership Web site at www.edex.org and order this free brochure. Bulk discounts are available for 500 copies or more from the Education Excellence Partnership, 1615 L Street N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036.

Literature Resources

Teacher Created Materials introduces six new books in the Literature Unit series. Each unit is presented as a guide for using a well-known piece of literature in the classroom. The guides also include sample plans, author information, vocabulary-building ideas, and cross-curricular activities. Primary level guides for Grades one to three include *Caps for Sale, The Courage of Sarah Noble,* and *Ira Sleeps Over*. The Challenging level books for grades five through eight offer such guides as *The Gift of the Magi and Other Stories, The Odyssey,* and *Holes*. $7.95 each. For more information: www.teachercreated.com.

innovative DISCIPLINE
The positive behavior techniques in this book are highly successful because they foster both self-respect and respect for others.

NEW from the NEA Professional Library

Innovative Discipline

Sabrina Holcomb and Marina Michalski, Editors
96pp., $9.95 #2916-X-00-FN

In this book, you'll find stories from teachers across the country illustrating, step-by-step, how they tackled a specific discipline challenge. Recently revised, *Innovative Discipline* features a new section on school safety, including an extensive resource list of books, videos, audiotapes, Web sites, and organizations that promote safe schools. This popular book also discusses peer mediation, self-help sessions, student-operated courts at the middle school level, and a variety of other discipline programs that are transforming the cultures of schools. To order, call 1-800/299-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

EXCERPT

"The earlier we empower our students to be responsible for their actions and education, the sooner we will see them making the wise choices that will securely qualify them as the leaders of the future. Like growing numbers of teachers and school systems, we feel that realigning systems, rather than trying to reshape students to fit systems, will help our children make that future a satisfying one."

Understanding Our Weather Systems

Gain insightful information, ideas for classroom discussions, and activities on the exciting weather patterns of our planet in Weather Insights. This periodical provides teachers with a helpful guide for planning and teaching lessons on meteorology. You can explore what causes hurricanes and how to track these huge storms in the Weather Classroom column. Learn how to prepare for weather emergencies and engage in classroom discussions about the problems they can cause for entire communities. This periodical can be ordered for your classroom for free by calling the Weather Channel Education Department at 800/471-5544.

BOOKS by NEA Members

The Cincinnati Red Stalkings

By Troy Soos
Mickey Rawlings, utility infielder for the Cincinnati Reds, is excited for what he believes will be an awesome season in 1921. Instead, he finds himself caught in the middle of a murder mystery when longtime Reds fan Oliver Perriman is found dead and Rawlings realizes he could be the next to go. 330 pp., $5.99 plus $2.75 s&h from Penguin Putnam Publishing, 405 Murray Hill Parkway, East Rutherford, NJ 07073, 800/631-8571.

Father By Blood

By Louella Bryant
Through the eyes of John Brown's daughter Annie, Louella Bryant takes a new approach to understanding the events that lead up to the historic raid on Harper's Ferry before the Civil War. For readers between the ages of 10 and 14, *Father By Blood* is a tale of love, loss, morality, sacrifice, and evil. 116 pp., $12.95 plus $3.50 s&h from the New England Press, Box 575, Shelburne, VT 05482, 802/863-2520. 20 percent discount for orders of more than five copies.

The Complete Poetry Book

A Teacher's Reference of Poetic Forms
By Dorian Marrone
From acrostics to villanelles, this book offers valuable time-saving references for all classrooms. All poetic forms are researched and outlined for teachers and students to follow. Sample poems are included, plus suggestions for integrating poetry across the curriculum. Order from Thinking Caps, Inc., P. O. Box 26239, Phoenix, AZ 85068.

CURTAINS! Familiar Plays for Little Actors

By Diane Head
The author has adapted nine familiar fairy tales into short plays for students pre-K-2. The collection supplies a word list at the beginning of each script to help the instructor place students in a play most suitable to their skills. *CURTAINS!* can help build self-esteem and peer cooperation, along with improving literacy skills. 87 pp, $11.99 plus $3 s&h from Frank Schaffer, P.O. Box 2853, Torrance, CA 90509, 800/421-5533.

TV TIPS

The Merrow Report: School Sleuth

PBS, November 2, 10:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. In this tongue-in-cheek episode, John Merrow plays a veteran private detective trying to solve The Case of the Excellent School. During his investigation, he uncovers five categories of school quality. P.I. Merrow discovers that there are many ways to evaluate schools beyond test scores and college acceptance rates, and he shares 25 practical ways of measuring excellence in education.

Napoleon, An Empires Special

PBS, November 8 and 15, 9:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This four-hour documentary chronicles the life of Napoleon Bonaparte, native Corsican, France's first consul, self-proclaimed emperor, and eventual exile. Napoleon's story is told with

dramatic recreations, original footage of European locales, and classic paintings from his time, along with commentary from modern historians and, through his own letters and writings, from Napoleon himself.

The Invisible Soldiers: Unheard Voices

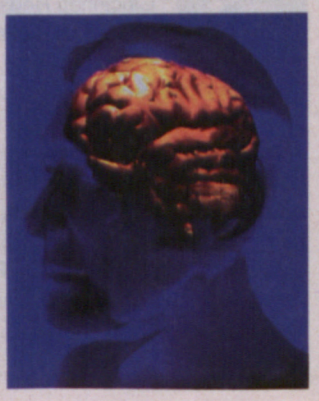
PBS, November 9, 10:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This program looks at the contributions of the African-American men and women in uniform during World War II who gave their loyalty, blood, and lives to protect a country that denied them the very freedoms for which they were fighting.

Great Books: 1984 and Les Miserables

The Learning Channel, November 10 and December 23, 10:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. In November, Great Books looks at *1984* in its historical and social context, exploring how Orwell's work was shaped by his experience with war and probing such themes as the violation of human rights, the technological invasion of privacy, and the destruction of culture. In December, *Les Miserables* examines the inseparability of Victor Hugo's writing and politics and his concerns about penal reform and the burdens of the poor and working classes.

CNN Newsroom: Trail of Tears and Your Brain

CNN, November 15 and December 6, 4:30-5:00 a.m. ET, check local listings.



CHALLENGE YOUR IMAGINATION CHALLENGE YOUR IMAGINATION CHALLENGE YOUR IMAGINATION
A New Toshiba For A New Century
125th ANNIVERSARY
TOSHIBA NSTA
ExploraVision AWARDS
Medicine tailored to an individual's genomes.
Toshiba and the NSTA are challenging your students to create the technology of the future! Winners with the most innovative ideas will be awarded a U.S. Savings Bond worth $10,000.*
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Tiny disease scrubbers for the arteries.
Computer software to trace hackers.
THINK INTO THE FUTURE
A garbage machine that sorts recyclables.
A super-duper lie blaster!
Machines that make veggies taste better.
What are you thinking?
An artificial pancreas to produce insulin.
Now in its ninth year, the ExploraVision Awards competition invites your students to select a current technology and envision it twenty years into the future. Teams of two to four students from grades K to 12 compete to find solutions to everyday problems and design Web pages to express their ideas.
In the spring, 24 regional teams will be chosen as semi-finalists and awarded prizes. These teams will then create functional Web sites to showcase their future technology ideas. Of the 24 teams, 8 finalist teams will be selected. Winners, their coaches and mentors will attend a gala awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., where each student member of the four first-place and four second-place teams will be awarded $10,000 and $5,000 U.S. Savings Bonds,* respectively. Honorable mentions will also be recognized for their creative vision.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOSHIBA/NSTA EXPLORAVISION AWARDS, AND TO VIEW LAST YEAR'S WINNERS' WEB SITES, CONNECT TO WWW.TOSHIBA.COM/TAI/EXPLORAVISION, CALL 1-800-EXPLOR-9 OR (703) 243-7100, OR WRITE TOSHIBA/NSTA EXPLORAVISION AWARDS, 1840 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON, VA 22201.
Part of Toshiba's commitment to education and fostering interest in science and technology, the Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards program is funded by Toshiba Corporation, the Toshiba America Group Companies and the Toshiba America Foundation, and is administered by the National Science Teachers Association. No purchase necessary to enter. Entrants must be a U.S. or Canadian citizen, or legal resident of the U.S., U.S. Territories, or Canada, 21 years of age or younger, and a full-time student in grades K-12, currently enrolled and attending an accredited institution. Void where prohibited. All entries must be received by 5pm EST, Friday, February 2, 2001.
* Or Canadian Savings Bonds of comparable issue price.
Photography by: Chris Carroll
The ideas represented here are a sampling of past ExploraVision winning entries.
In Touch with Tomorrow
TOSHIBA
www.toshiba.com

In recognition of Native American History month, on November 15, CNN Newsroom retraces the forced march westward by Native Americans in "Trail of Tears." On December 6, "Your Brain" looks at the teen brain and how its development affects adolescent behavior. For more information, or to receive classroom guides and programming information by E-mail, log on to:www.turnerlearning.com.

Founding Fathers
The History Channel, November 27-30, 9:00-10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This four-part series explores the human side of the men who shaped America's struggle for independence from Britain. Profiles of Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and others consider the flesh-and-blood men behind the legends and offer insight into the shaping of America's destiny.

Half Past Autumn: The Life and Works of Gordon Parks
HBO, November 30, 9:00-10:30 p.m. ET, check local listings. Airing in honor of Gordon Parks' 88th birthday, this feature-length presentation profiles photographer, novelist, poet, musician, and filmmaker Gordon Parks, while exploring America's social history through his life and work. Drawing on the work of Parks himself, the documentary features archival footage of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, as well as interviews with friends, family, colleagues, and others who were acquainted with him.

Conquistadors: An Online Learning Adventure
PBS.org, November 2000. This learning adventure parallels an upcoming PBS documentary, "In the Footsteps of the Conquistadors," which is scheduled to air in the spring. An online historical travelogue will transport students from Spain to Central and South America, and the southern United States. In addition to lesson plans, activities, and articles, the site also provides an exploration of the clash between the cultures of Old World Conquistadors and New World indigenous peoples and looks at how those events have shaped, and continue to shape, life in the modern world.

Inside the Space Station
Discovery Channel, December 10, 9:00-10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This program examines the structure of the International Space Station and how astronauts have worked in space to build it. Designed to be a multi-room space platform and research facility, the station includes six laboratories where scientists will study scientific visualization and surgery, microgravity cancer treatments, and the development of space-grown sources of petroleum. A companion virtual experience for exploring living and working in space can be found at Discovery.com.

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CDNT1100

David Copperfield

TNT, December 10 and 11, 8:00-10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This presentation tells the story of Charles Dickens' semi-autobiographical character, David Copperfield, a young man struggling toward manhood in a treacherous and tempting city on the verge of the Modern Age. A study guide for history, language arts, and filmmaking classes, which includes a film synopsis, links to historical information, and discussion questions and activities can be found at turnerlearning.com/tntlearning.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For more information on children's shows, check out the KIDSNET Web site at www.kidsnet.org.

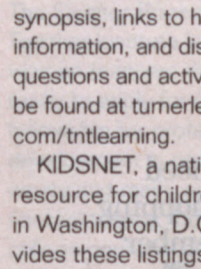
FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Teenage Girls Speak Out

The pressures young girls face in dealing with sex, drugs, and peer hostility are all addressed in *Voices of a Generation.* This intimate study of what teenage girls view as their most important struggles gives a voice to young girls who often keep these issues to themselves. Available from the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 800/225-9998, $13.95 for members and $14.95 for non-members. Minimum purchase of $25 required, plus $7.95 s&h.

Children's Thanksgiving

It's a Family Thanksgiving! gives children in grades K-5 the history of the American Thanksgiving holiday through the centuries instead of stopping with the Pilgrims. It includes activities that range from baking pumpkin bread to thinking up fair laws for a new town. There's a section on the origins of traditional Thanksgiving foods, such as the double Atlantic crossing of domestic turkeys. $9.95 plus $1.05 s&h from Harmony Hearth, P.O. Box 341511, West Bethesda, MD 20827-1511, 301/469-0660, or go to www.thanksgivingbook.com.



Online Courses

Online courses in such fields as Literary Studies, Technology, Arts & Leisure, Life Improvement, and Health & Wellness are available free at Barnes & Noble University. They include computer and Internet-related topics such as: Beginning Macromedia Flash Web Animation, Adobe Photoshop Basics, Building Your First Web Page, and Web Site Design and Management. Visit www.barnesandnobleuniversity.com.

Everyone Can Teach

What Is a Teacher? informs young children of the qualities that make teachers successful at their job. With patience, persistence, guidance, the ability to answer questions and give clear explanations, it doesn't matter what age you are, you can be a teacher. $19.90 plus s&h from Millbrook Press, 2 Old New Milford Road—Dept. LS, Brookfield, CT 06804, 800/462-4703.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2001 UniServ Affirmative Action Program

NEA is seeking minority and female candidates for the 2001 UniServ Intern Program. Individuals who successfully complete the four-and-a-half week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by the NEA as eligible for UniServ staff positions in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to moving for the three-month field experience. Requirements:

1. Ethnic minority or female as designated by the U.S. census.
2. Active NEA member for at least one year.
3. Basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local and state level.
4. Commitment to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program.
5. Excellent interpersonal skills.
6. Willingness to participate in intensive training.
7. Willingness to resign all Association offices at the local, state, and national levels.
8. Willingness to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

The NEA does not guarantee employment of Uniserv staff. Employment is a state and local decision.

Send a letter of interest to: Brenda Vincent, Uniserv Intern program, NEA Membership and Affiliates, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, by mail or Federal Express. No faxed copies, please.

Letters must be received by December 8, 2000. Those received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Application packets along with basic instructions will be sent to applicants starting December 1, 2000. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2001. Questions? Call your local Uniserv director.

Math Challenges for Parents and Kids

Why are manhole covers round? You'll find that question in *Figure This!*—a set of intriguing math challenges for middle school parents and their children. The challenges are not intended for the classroom. They are to help parents provide support at home for learning math. These new materials were created by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, and the Learning First Alliance, which includes the NEA. Funding comes from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. Parents can get the challenge books—free—by calling 1-877-GO-SOLVE (1-877-467-6583). For more info, go to www.figurethis.org. For NEA's attractive *Figure This!* poster, E-mail pmathews@nea.org. Supplies are limited!

New Resource for Science Teachers

The National Science Teachers Association offers the full text of select books online—free. Teachers can preview books such as *The Creation Controversy & The Science Classroom,* and the *Science-by-Design Series,* a set of design-build projects to enlighten students in the process of scientific discovery by using hands-on physics, biology, and math concepts. Go to www.nsta.org/store and click on "Read It!"

Now's the Time

The deadline for submitting applications for NEA's 2001 Human and Civil Rights Awards has been moved up. Nomination forms and documentation for this year's awards must be postmarked on or before December 15, 2000 and mailed to: NEA Human and Civil Rights, Attn: Doris Belton, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Contact your state Association to pick up nomination forms or call 202/822-7713 for further information.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday by passing on his philosophy of nonviolence to your students, colleagues, or customers. The Freedom Trail Project has produced unique, colorful, and educational posters and brochures containing historical information about the Civil Rights movement, King's "Principles and Steps of Nonviolence," a message from Coretta Scott King, and the "Living the Dream" pledge of action.

Receive one free brochure with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Steps and Principles of Nonviolence by writing the Freedom Trail Project at PO Box 1501, Columbia, MD 21044. Teachers may E-mail their request to jimhrc@erols.com. Please specify that you are an NEA member.

Teacher Radio

Scholastic's *Teacher Radio* offers educators access to experts from a variety of areas, from child development expert Dr. Bruce Perry to *Harry Potter* author J.K. Rowling. Listen any time, day or night to current or past programs just as you would a CD. Visit www.scholastic.com.

AWARDS/GRANTS

Woodrow Wilson Science Institutes

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation is offering science teachers, grades 6-12, the opportunity to study biological or environmental science at residential summer institutes at Princeton University, the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, or at biological field stations in Costa Rica. All expenses are paid and there is a stipend of $1,200 for those at the New Jersey and Princeton institutes. Fifty slots are available. All applications are due by January 16, 2001. Visit www.woodrow.org/teachers or call 609/452-7007 ext.121.

Teachers Hall of Fame Nominations

The National Teachers Hall of Fame is looking for a few great teachers for its 10th Annual Induction Program. All nominations must be submitted on an official nomination form.

Nomination materials must be postmarked on or before January 6, 2001. The 2001 forms may be obtained by calling 1/800-96-TEACH, 316/341-5660, faxing a request to 316/341-5912, writing to The National Teachers Hall of Fame, 1320 C of E Drive, Emporia, KS 66801, or accessing the nomination form online at www.nthf.org.

Candidates eligible for induction must have at least 20 years of full-time classroom teaching in grades pre-kindergarten through high school. Candidates may be current or retired teachers, must be living at the time of selection, and must be (or have been) certified public or non-public schoolteachers.

A national committee, which consists of educational organization representatives, Hall of Fame members, and friends of education, makes the final

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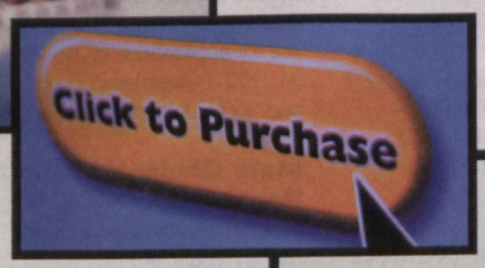

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selections. Five teachers are then selected for induction annually. The 2001 Class will be inducted in Emporia, Kansas (June 21-24, 2001) and recognized in Washington, D.C. Hall of Fame members are enshrined in The National Teachers Hall of Fame with a plaque and memorabilia from their teaching careers.

Women Teachers

The Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute is offering women teachers the opportunity to apply for a year-long fellowship for professional development in gender equity and math, science and /or technology, including college courses, seminars, and professional workshops. The fellowship begins with an all-expenses-paid visit to Washington, D.C., where teachers will participate in the Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute. This opportunity is available to public school K-12 women teachers who have taught for three years or more and teach science, math, and/or technology. To take a look at some previously funded projects, go to www.aauw.org/3000/ertf.pdf.

Student Service Awards

The President's Student Service Challenge offers $1,000 college scholarships for young people who've made a difference in their communities by performing 100 hours of service. More than 41,000 awards have been presented to outstanding student volunteers across the nation. Students from kindergarten through college are eligible. Applications are accepted year-round. Scholarship deadlines are TBA. Visit www.student-service-awards.org.

Tolerance Grants

The Southern Poverty Law Center is offering grants of as much as $2,000 to K-12 classroom teachers who implement tolerance projects in their schools and communities. Visit www.splcenter.org and go to Teaching Tolerance.

Milagro Foundation

Started in 1998 by Carlos and Deborah Santana, the Milagro Foundation supports educational efforts to help children and youth live healthy lives, literate lives, and culturally enriched lives. For more information, go to www.santana.com/milagro/.

School Grants Web Site

This Web site contains a collection of resources and tips to help K-12 educators apply for and obtain grants for a wide variety of projects. www.schoolgrants.org.

Math/Science Grants

Growth Initiatives for Teachers (GIFT) is a grant program designed for public and private school math and science teachers, grades seven through 12, across the nation and in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The GIFT grant program was established by the GTE Foundation to promote the integration of math and science in the classroom, to encourage the innovative use of technology in education, and to provide recognition and new opportunities for outstanding teachers.

Each year, Verizon awards GIFT grants to 70 teams of one math and one science teacher from the same secondary school who have developed school enrichment projects that integrate math and science and use technology in a creative way. Each winning team shares a $15,000 GIFT grant—$8,000 to implement the school enrichment project and $7,000 ($3,500 each) for the participating teachers to pursue professional development activities.

Applications are now available online at http://foundation.verizon.com/04010_a.html. The deadline for submitting applications is January 12, 2001. Interested teachers may also receive an application by mail by calling 800/315-5010, or by sending an E-mail to gift@verizon.com.

WEB WINNERS

Call Outs

Some online resources are just plain handy. Like this *Area Code Listing*, by Number site, which lets you identify major cities by, of course, area code.
A reverse-tracking tool. Go to: www.cs.ucsd.edu/~bsy/area.html.

Fraud Help

The FBI has teamed up with the National White Collar

Crime Center (NW3C, to the digerati) in order to offer consumers a much-needed Internet Fraud Complaint Center. Calling all victims! Log on to www.ifccfbi.gov/.

Only Good Stuff

In our REALLY-fed-up-with-junk-E-mail category: The good E-mail is sent on to you, while suspected spam

messages are sidelined into a *Brightmail Caught Spam* box. Free to individuals. Go to: www.brightmail.com/individual/.

Birdwatching

www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/birdcam2000/index.shtml.

Watch these peregrine parents tend their clutch. A site birdwatching enthusiasts have been waiting for. Brought to us by the aptly named *Birdcam 2000*.

Movies

The Complete History of the Discovery of Cinematography offers an illustrated chronology of the development of motion pictures over a period of 2,500

years. Go to: www.precinemahistory.net/.

Whatever the Weather

www.weatherplanner.com.
To help make sure it doesn't rain on your parade, plan a visit to Weatherplanner, which boasts that its long-range forecasts have long been used by government agen-

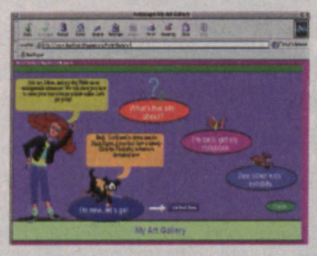
cies, the film industry, and major companies. Weather planner provides predictions of the weather up to a year in advance.

Medical Mysteries

http://consumerpdr.net/consumer/index.htm.
For more than 50 years, doctors have relied upon the Physicians' Desk Reference for the most up-to-date drug information. PDR jumps to the Web to help consumers learn more about detecting, preventing, and treating various conditions.

Picasso? Monet?

You can create your own personal online art exhibit. The Seattle Art Museum launches a fun and educational Web site to guide students through the process of creating an art exhibit from the museum's collections. It also provides an opportunity to learn the curatorial process online and to visually analyze and interpret the art. My Art Gallery begins with an animated introduction by a young



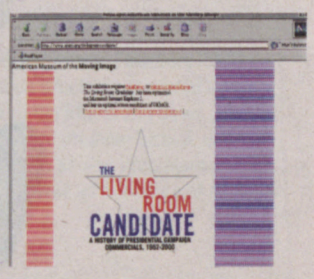
spirited narrator of the site's five activities. Following each activity, students type in their own ideas or observations, which are logged into a notebook. At completion of the lessons, the notes are used to create an online art exhibit. For more: www.SeattleArtMuseum.org/MyArtGallery.

What's New in Robotland?

http://ranier.hq.nasa.gov/telerobotics_page/coolrobots.html.
Robots are doing that which only writers of science fiction once thought possible, and Cool Robot of the Week keeps abreast of the technological advances.

On the Campaign Trail

In our glutton-for-political-punishment category: The Living Room Candidate provides a multimedia history



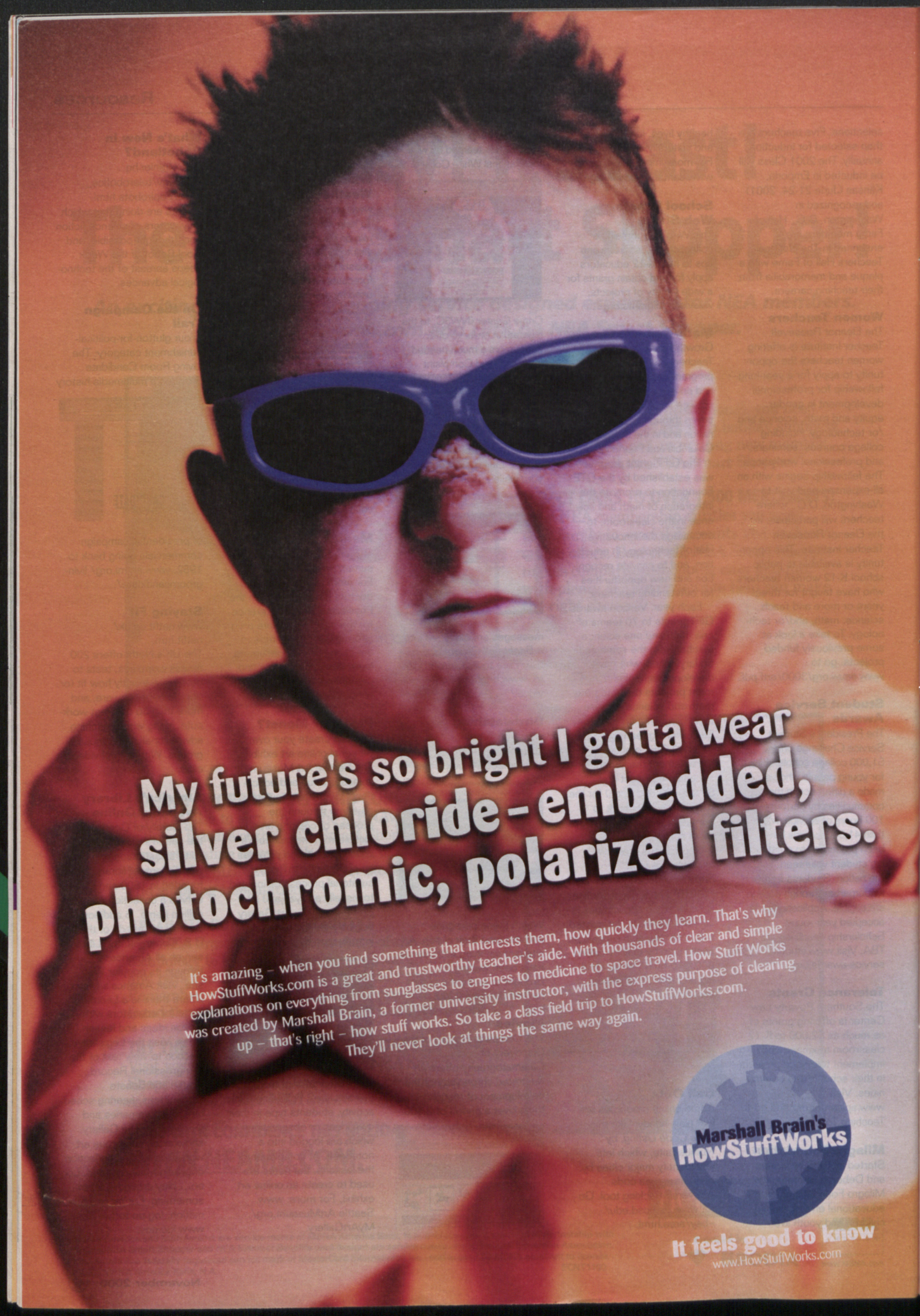
of presidential campaign commercials going back to 1952. www.ammi.org/livingroomcandidate/.

Staying Fit

www.netfit.co.uk/netfit.htm.
The UK's Netfit offers 200 fitness exercises, tests to determine exactly how fit (or out of shape) you are, and more than 30 different workouts, along with stretching advice for all major muscle groups. With helpful video clips.

America's Library Available Online

The Library of Congress is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and the world's largest library. It was founded in 1800 and preserves a collection of 119 million items. In addition to serving the needs of the U.S. Congress, the Library serves all Americans through its popular Web site. Visit America's Memory where there is a Learning Page for educators with lesson ideas and lesson plans. Visit the Legislative Section to view text of the Congressional Record, House and Senate Committees, hearing schedules, bill summaries and much more. The Gallery showcases numerous artworks including a collection of presidential portraits. Log on… play around… learn something. For more information, log on to: www.loc.gov.


My future's so bright I gotta wear silver chloride-embedded, photochromic, polarized filters.
It's amazing – when you find something that interests them, how quickly they learn. That's why HowStuffWorks.com is a great and trustworthy teacher's aide. With thousands of clear and simple explanations on everything from sunglasses to engines to medicine to space travel. How Stuff Works was created by Marshall Brain, a former university instructor, with the express purpose of clearing up – that's right – how stuff works. So take a class field trip to HowStuffWorks.com. They'll never look at things the same way again.
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American Education Week

November 12-18

"Children-Schools-Parents: Helping Students Achieve" is the theme for this year's celebration of American Education Week (AEW). ESP Day is Nov. 15, a day especially set aside to spotlight the work of NEA's school support staff members. Go to www.nea.org/aew for a host of resources that will help you celebrate this special week in American education. At the site, you'll find sample news releases, ideas for holding your own local celebrations, even artwork you can download.

DIVERSITY Calendar

January, 2001

Epiphany, January 6
Epiphany, also called the Twelfth Day, is celebrated 12 days after Christmas. Epiphany means "dawning of light" and commemorates the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus, who would later become Jesus Christ, the Christian's savior. Epiphany is generally noted in American Christian services, and is celebrated widely in Mexico and Latin-American countries.

Japanese New Year, December 29-January 3
Japanese New Year, also known as Shogatsu or Ganjitsu, is celebrated by many businesses in Japan from December 29 through January 3. At this time, many visit shrines to pray for good fortune and health to come, and Buddhist prayer bells ring out 108 times. The observance of Shogatsu is the most significant and elaborate event in Japan.

February—Black History Month

Race Relations Day, February 14
Race Relations Day is a U.S. Protestant holiday started in 1924 to encourage understanding among all races.

Abu Simbel Festival, February 22
Abu Simbel Festival in Egypt celebrates the two days of the year (the other being October 22) on which the light of the rising sun can reach the 180-foot-deep innermost chambers of Abu Simbel, the great temple of Ramses II.

Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week, February 20-27
Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week is sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The objective of this week is to promote justice, understanding, and cooperation among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, as well as tolerance of all faiths.

Credible information.

Focused information.

In-depth information.

A to Z information.

20/20 information

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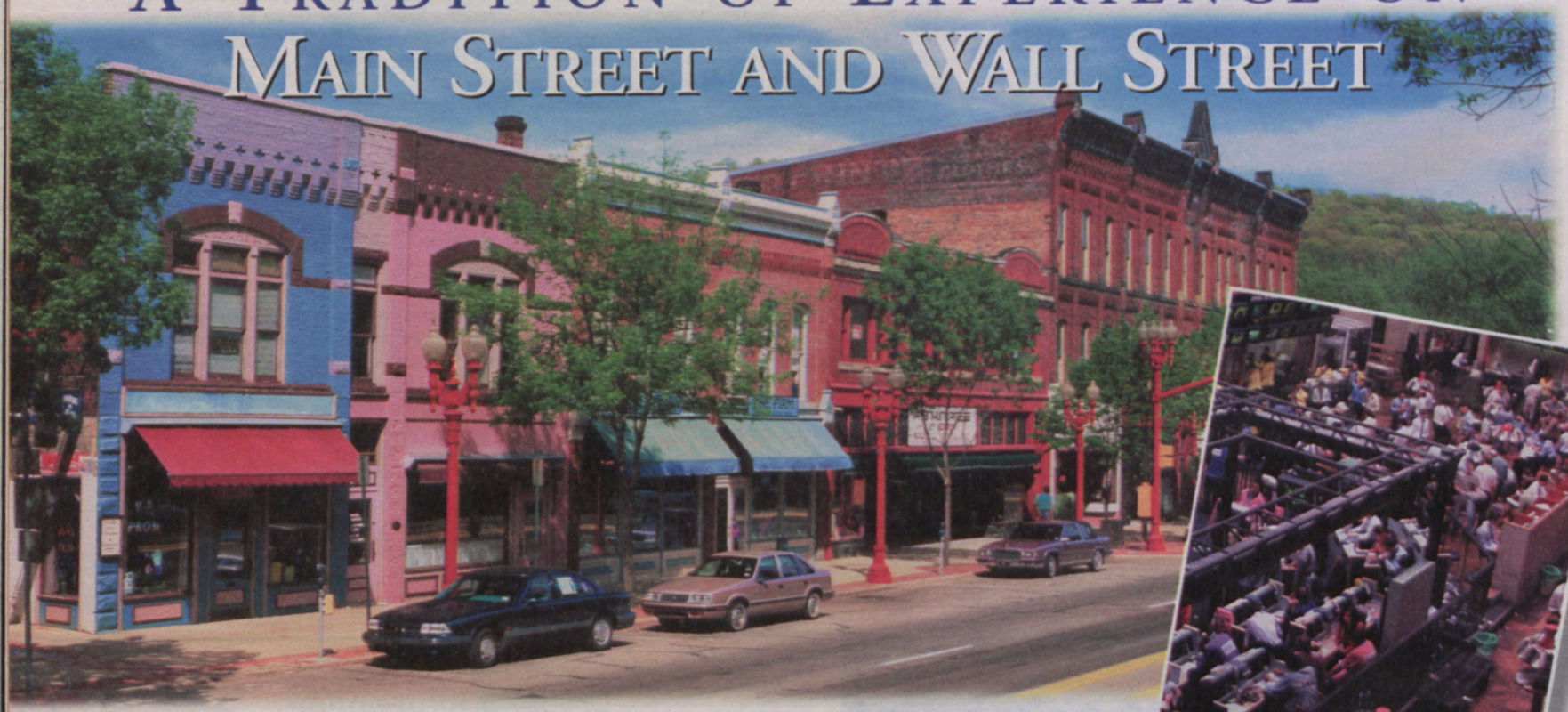

The NEA Valuebuilder Program is pleased to announce that following an extensive review of numerous companies, **The Security Benefit Group of Companies** has been chosen as the Program's new exclusive provider.

For decades, Security Benefit has been providing innovative retirement products and services to educators across the country. Founded in America's heartland over 100 years ago, the company has been dedicated to helping men and women build financially secure futures.

A Clear Choice

There were many outstanding qualities that helped us determine that Security Benefit was the company we were looking for:

- A tradition of excellent customer service
- A deep pool of responsive representatives to provide members with retirement and financial education
- A rich heritage of innovation and creativity
- A rock solid financial foundation and risk management philosophy

Consistently ranked as having one of the best customer service programs in the country, Security Benefit is dedicated to providing the information you need to make important financial decisions. Your NEA Valuebuilder representative will be available to personally guide you through the process of planning for your retirement.

A Tradition of Experience on Wall Street and Main Street

The reason Security Benefit was chosen as the retirement specialist for NEA members is clear. In an increasingly sophisticated financial services industry, we believe NEA members deserve nothing less than unsurpassed service along with state-of-the-art investment expertise. Security Benefit provides both by blending its Main Street philosophy with a Wall Street experience to provide tremendous value for NEA members.

Call toll-free to learn more about the
NEA Valuebuilder Program and Security Benefit. **1-877-NEA8668**

NEA Valuebuilder. Program
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VBNT11

WEB WINNERS

CNN for Schools
http://fyi.cnn.com/fyi

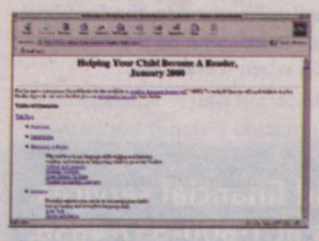
This new Web site offers both student and teacher editions. CNN Interactive combines the resources of Riverdeep Interactive Learning, Harcourt, and HighWired.com to provide students and teachers a safe place to find news and information from around the world, plus educator-designed classroom and homework materials.

Teacher-Related Web Sites
www.teachercreated.com
Links to Web sites useful for teachers, including lesson plans, special education sites, government data sources, major newspapers, and many others, are available free from Teacher Created Materials.

Youth Policy Forum
www.aypf.org/whatsnew.htm

The American Youth Policy Forum has issued a report, *Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works and What Doesn't*, that concludes "get tough" policies don't work, but describes other approaches that do.

Help With Reading
www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Reader/index.html



Helping Your Child Become a Reader, a booklet in the *Helping Your Child* series from the U.S. Department of Education, has family activities for children to age 6.

Classroom Assessment
www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/index/
The Art and Science of Classroom Assessment: The Missing Part of Pedagogy is a synthesis of research from ERIC Digests, a service of the U.S. Department of Education.

History-Making
www.mbcnet.org/debateweb/
Put the current Presidential debates into the context of history with a multimedia celebration of 40 years of television and politics. *The Great Debate and Beyond* captures scenes from past debates and offers video commentary.

Know Your Way Around
www.census.gov/qfd/
You can get the statistical lowdown on the geographical area where you live with a few mouse clicks at State and County Quick-Facts. Created by the United States Census Bureau, this factoid haven spits out frequently requested information on various geographical levels.

The "World" is within Reach

Now you can take your students to a place they've dreamed of, for a learning experience they will never forget!

Disney Youth Education Series (Y.E.S.) curriculum-based adventures illuminate a "world" of textbook principles inside- and behind-the-scenes of the **Walt Disney World®** Theme Parks, at special prices designed for student travel.

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www.YouthEducationSeries.com
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Focus on Finance

Information and helpful tips on managing your money – brought to you by NEA Member Benefits.

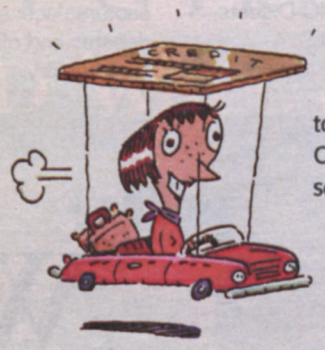
Long-Term Coverage in Short

As you age, it's natural to become more concerned about who will take care of you when you can no longer take care of yourself. Nursing home care cost an average $37,000 a year in 1995. Medicaid, a national health welfare program, pays for over half of the nation's nursing home expenses, but only after each patient's personal funds have been depleted.

Medicare, national coverage for older people, covers this kind of care only in specific circumstances and for a limited time period. If your assets amount to less than $750,000, and you are not impoverished enough to qualify for Medicaid, purchasing insurance to cover long-term health or nursing home care could protect your assets for your spouse or children. Long-term care insurance coverage is full of detailed complexities, so here are some helpful hints:

- If you enroll, be sure you can afford the premiums for as long as you'll need coverage. If you let coverage drop before using it you've lost your money.
- Some plans let you lock in rates, which helps if you buy at a younger age. Rates average $1,850 at age 65, but only $888 at age 50.
- If you do buy young, consider including inflation protection. This will increase your benefits by 5% a year.

Who Insures You When You Rent a Car?



Rental car agents sometimes suggest that you purchase optional insurance packages that you may not need. Many credit cards provide collision damage coverage for rentals when you use them to pay for the car. Check your card's "Terms and Conditions," or call your card's customer service representative for details. Your own car insurance may cover you for the liability insurance on rentals, and your homeowner's or renter's insurance may take care of Personal Effects Insurance. Check your policy or call your insurance provider. A little research before you rent another car could save you quite a bundle.

How Good is Your Credit? Better Check.

Your creditors know your credit rating, and you may want to also, especially if you are planning on applying for a major loan. A poor rating could affect the lender's decision. Credit reporting agencies are required to give you at least one copy of your credit rating per year free in the following states: CO, GA, MA, MD, NJ, VT. In other states you'll pay a nominal fee. You can also request a free copy within 60 days of being denied credit, employment, insurance or rental housing. One credit reporting agency is Experian, which you can reach at 1-888 EXPERIAN (1 888 397 3742).

What do Pensacola, Kerrville, and Coeur d'Alene have in common?

These three towns rank as the most affordable retirement spots in the country when taking into account the cost of health care, housing, taxes, recreation, food, utilities, and transportation.

For more options on retirement sites, visit: www.bestretirementspots.com.

Source: www.bestretirementspots.com

	PENSACOLA, FL	KERRVILLE, TX	COEUR D'ALENE, ID
Location	Gulf coast	Heart of Texas hill country	Lakeside by a Nat'l Forest
Living Costs	90 percentile*	95 percentile*	88 percentile*
State Income Tax	None	None	2-8.2%
Sales Tax	7% (medical services, groceries, prescriptions exempt)	8.25% (prescriptions and groceries exempt)	5% (prescriptions and medical services exempt)
Inheritance Tax	None	None	None
Property Tax (per $1,000)	$24	$16.65-$17.25	$16.65-$17.25
Population	423,000	17,000 (1/3 retirees)	32,000

* Using cost-of-living and/or taxes as determinants with 100 being the national average

Don't Save Your Money in Your Mattress, But Be Sure You Have A Financial Cushion

It's always a good idea to have cash reserves on hand, should you experience a sudden job loss or some other unfortunate setback. A money market fund is a solid choice for keeping several months' worth of expenses as a financial cushion. It keeps your money readily available while you earn risk-free interest. You can open a money market account with a low initial deposit and enjoy the reassurance of FDIC insurance for up to $100,000 per depositor.

Call on this deal!

You can save a lot of money on long distance phone calls from any phone when you use pre-paid "stand-alone" phone cards. They beat the major long distance carriers cold. Rates vary dramatically among cards, but among the best, according to Consumers Union, are ASU, Express Tel, and Voice Net.

Source: The Detroit News

Increase your Net worth. Go online for free information and advice.

See into the crystal ball. Examine your Social Security benefits estimate for a better understanding of what you'll get paid: www.ssa.gov/oACT/AANCPIA/compute.htm

This site is bursting with news for seniors – including expert advice, assistance, poetry, jokes, and even more: www.seniors-site.com

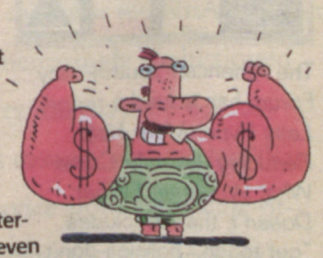
Now you can get reliable health and medical information, plus referrals, all on-line at this noteworthy government site: www.healthfinder.gov

Savvy Survey – Are you an informed consumer?

Try these three questions that test your smarts as a shopper:

1. Paying off high-interest debt with monthly installments from your paycheck is better than withdrawing from savings. ❍ True ❍ False
2. The quick tax refund, offered by some preparers, provides a smart and early start on earning interest. ❍ True ❍ False
3. Choosing the "optional replacement cost coverage" is a better idea than taking just the standard "reimbursement coverage" on your homeowners' or renters' insurance policy. ❍ True ❍ False

Answers



1. **False.** The interest that escalates as you take time to pay off your balance cancels out the rate at which you could earn interest from savings, even with a high yield money market or a CD.
2. **False.** These refunds come with very high interest and service fees attached, and often not much faster than your regular refund.
3. **True.** "Reimbursement coverage" pays only the value of an item as estimated in its present condition. For a small amount more, the "optional replacement cost coverage" refunds the full value of an item, based on when it was new.

For more information on investment strategies and financial services for you and your family, call NEA Member Benefits at 1-800-637-4636.

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

Or visit our Web Site at www.neamb.com

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What Can I Count On? It's Your Life, Insure It!

Q: What kind of investment returns should I expect?

A: Most people expect too much. It's not difficult to see why. For the four years from the beginning of 1995 through the end of 1998, the U.S. stock market, as measured by the Standard & Poor's Index of 500 stocks, returned an average of 30 percent a year! Last year that dropped to 21 percent.

Those are astounding numbers. To put that in perspective, consider that the historical average return on stocks is 10 to 11 percent a year, bonds around 6 percent, and cash 3 or 4 percent.

Most professionals argue that we are due for a "regression to the mean," by which they mean some negative years to pull down those lofty returns of the 1990s. Others say that things have changed, that technology has improved productivity and we will all profit from it, and that the baby boomer scramble to save for retirement will buoy the market for a good long time.

We don't know which group is right. And we can't afford to be paralyzed worrying about it. The important thing is to make regular investments.

Setting goals does require that you think about a reasonable investment return. One thing you might find helpful is the Rule of 72. This rule allows you to find out how many years it will take your money to double at various earnings rates. Divide 72 by the return you expect to get and the answer tells you how long it will take you to double your money.

So, for instance, if you could earn an average of 15 percent a year, your money would double in 4.8 years. If you expect to double your money in a year, you need a little better than a 75 percent return. Pretty tough to do. (You can also turn it around and divide 72 by the number of years in which you want to double your money to see what return you'd need to accomplish that.)

Most investment pros I talk with assume it takes seven years to double your money as a sort of rule of thumb. That assumes a 10 percent return, which is a reasonable expectation. So if you are 14 years from retirement, this rule says you might expect two doubles.

Q: Is life insurance a good investment?

A: I think it's a mistake to think of life insurance as an "investment." If you have dependents who count on your income, life insurance coverage is an absolute necessity. For young couples and young families, the most economical way to buy that coverage is with straight term insurance, which means you pay a premium and you get coverage for a specified term.

When people start talking about investments in the same breath as "life insurance," they typically mean some type of cash value or whole life policy that combines straight insurance protection with an investment account that may be invested, for example, in mutual funds.

The problem with this investment-type insurance is that too much of it is sold for the wrong reasons. What I've seen time after time over the 25 years I've been writing about personal finance is that life insurance is improperly sold as an investment for retirement or an investment for college.

Life insurance is life insurance. An investment-type policy might be a good investment for your beneficiaries. Or it might not. But it is never the best investment for college savings or for retirement. It helps to remember that it is insurance. First and foremost, it is insurance.

Q: My 13-year-old daughter is interested in stocks.How can she learn more?

A: There is so much good educational material available online at sites like www.morningstar.com,. www.vanguard.com, and www.moneycentral.com, where I write a weekly column.

I would encourage her to pick some stocks and set up a portfolio at a free site like www.morningstar.com or www.moneycentral.com. We call this a "watch portfolio" because she doesn't actually own the stocks but is just watching them. That will allow her to observe how the stocks react to various news events and earnings reports. At Money Central, for instance, the investor is flagged when there is any news about a stock in his portfolio.

Online newsgroups can be a good place to pick up information, too. If your daughter introduces herself as a teenager who wants to learn about stocks, I suspect many regulars will be eager to help.

Finally, I would encourage her to put some money in a couple of stocks. A small amount of money to start. A couple of Web sites come to mind where investors can buy stocks for just a few dollars with no investment minimum: www.buyandhold.com and www.sharebuilder.com.

—Mary Rowland

Rowland is an author and contributor to financial planning magazines.

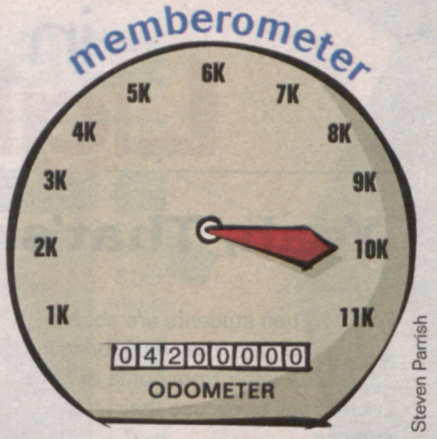
Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from NEA members Mary Baker, a Waterbury, Connecticut, second grade teacher, and Patricia Butchko, a first grade teacher from Scottsdale, Arizona.

Baker: "I recently received a plant holder as a personal gift. But instead of using it at home, I brought it to school and turned it into a handy place to store student school supplies. The stand has different size pot holders that accommodate most of the students' supplies. One holds glue bottles, glue sticks, and scissors. The lower tier holds pencils, tracing plates, crayons, and markers."

Butchko: "I use material to cover my bulletin boards. Every month, when we teach a certain unit, I change the material. For example, when I teach about insects, I put up material with a lady bug pattern. For Halloween, I put up material with scarecrows on it. For Christmas, it's angels, for Valentine's Day, red hearts. I save the material from year to year, and some of the material—especially the cloth with letters and numbers on it—I keep up year round. Using the material keeps me from having to change the artwork every month."

If you have a favorite money-saving tip that you apply in your workplace, send your idea along to neatoday@nea.org.



Steven Parrish

In FY 1999-2000, over 10,000 NEA members traveled over 4.2 million miles in cars rented through the NEA Car Rental Program.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Calculators Online

If you're puzzled about how much home you can afford to buy, try the "Financing Calculator" pages on the NEA Member Benefits Web site. The calculation will take only a few seconds, after some personal financial data is entered from your computer keyboard, and it's all done in the privacy of your own home without waiting in line to talk to a bank officer.

The home loan affordability page is one of many financial calculators on the NEA Member Benefits Web site (www.neamb.com).

To select one of the calculators, click "Life Planning" on the home page. You'll have a choice of financial tools at your fingertips, including information on refinancing, renting vs. buying, and loan consolidations.

You can also compare loan offerings from different financial institutions by using one of the calculators.

Check the Rates

The "Savings, Deposit and Investment Programs" page on this same Web site offers you immediate, around-the-clock access to the current rates on the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD and the NEA FDIC-Insured Money Market.

The latest yields on certificates of deposit and money market funds offered by NEA Member Benefits are updated each Monday.

The rates have frequently beaten or matched some of the best yields in the nation.

You can download an application form from the NEA MB Web site to enroll in either of the two savings programs.

To open an account or get current rates, call 800/205-8647, ext. 3231.

in the Light Lane

'Yeah, That's the One!'

When students are absent or late, they must bring in a letter from home or have a parent call to excuse their absence.

One girl came in after missing a half day and reported to the attendance office as required. The girl said she was late because she had a doctor's appointment. But the student didn't have a note from home.

The office secretary offered to call her mom to excuse her absence, but the girl "couldn't remember her mom's work number." The secretary then offered to call and confirm her visit with the doctor, but the girl had forgotten "the name of the doctor."

The secretary then decided to suggest some doctors "in the area" that the girl might have seen.

"Could it have been Dr. Kevorkian?" another secretary then jumped in and asked.

"Yeah! Yeah!" the girl yelled out, without any hesitation. "That's the doctor I saw today!"

Karey Howell
Lakewood Washington

Toward the end of school I was walking my first graders back from the library and holding the hand of the first little girl. She looked at my hand and asked where I got the brown spots. People, I replied, got them when they got older. I asked if her grandmother had them.

Her reply made me decide it was time to retire!

"Not my grandmother," she said, "my great-grandmother."

Jean Weaver
Chesterfield, Missouri

After discussing the greenhouse effect, ozone, and the atmosphere for a week in seventh grade science, I asked a student, "If your mom asked what the greenhouse effect is, what would you tell her?"

She picked up her science book and said, "Look it up." We all laughed.

Alison Graf
New Jersey

Recently, I worked as an aide in a pre-school where teachers are younger than I am.

"Are you a teacher?" a little boy named Zachary asked.

"I've always been a teacher," I said.

"Before you got wrinkly?"

Helen Jones
Lakehurst, New Jersey

Because we have a snack every afternoon in my kindergarten class, we go over proper manners and how to politely turn down a snack that we don't want.

I wasn't sure if the lesson was being absorbed, though, until one morning. As I passed out an activity page we were going to do, one of my students lifted his head and very politely told me, "No, thank you."

Terry McDermid
Joplin, Missouri

As an elementary school counselor, I often discuss behavior with students.

"I hope you can turn yourself around now and have a good rest of the day," I noted to one first grader.

He got up out of his chair, turned it around, and then sat back down in it. We often forget how literal kids are with interpretations.

Kelly McNamara
Worcester, Massachusetts

I was working with a second grade student on some basic comprehension skills.

I had just completed reading a short story about a dog named Spot. The student was asked to follow along with the story, using picture cues.

All of a sudden the student turned to me.

"The dog in the pictures does not have spots," he said, "so why would they name him Spot?"

After I finished praising him for his keen eye, he asked, "But won't that give the dog a complex?"

Jennifer Huff
Allentown, Pennsylvania

I was out in the hall one day and overheard a colleague reviewing shapes with her kindergarten class.

As she held up each construction paper shape, the class would call out the name of the shape.

"Square," they chanted in unison, then, "Triangle."

Holding up the paper circle, the teacher received the correct response from the class. Then the teacher carefully folded the circle shape in half and held it up for her class to see.

"Now what do I have?" she asked.

There was silence, and then an excited voice piped up: "Tacos!"

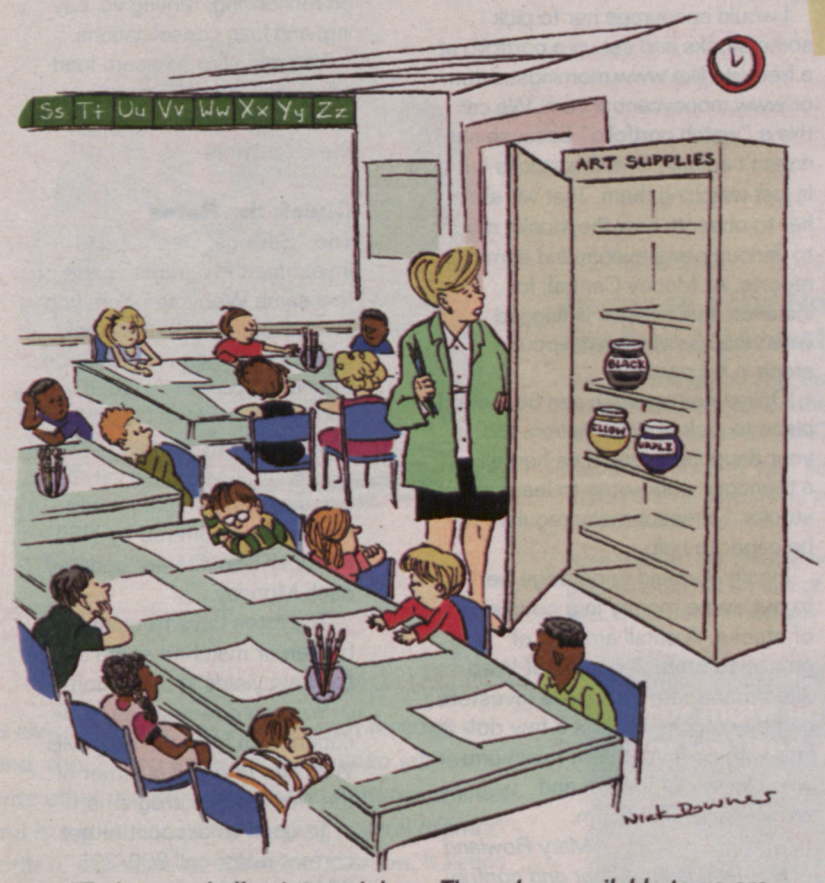
Deb Hansen
Douglas, Wyoming

I was using a new tape recorder in my third grade classroom and, instead of rewinding the tape, I kept fastforwarding.

When I figured it out, I told my students that I needed to put this down in my "DUH! Journal."

One little boy said, very seriously, "I don't have a DUH! Journal. Do I need one?" I replied, "You probably don't."

Carole Leishman
Vernal, Utah



"Today we shall paint a rainbow. The colors available to us are black, yellow, and purple."

In Jeopardy

After studying the Southeast region of the United States, I reviewed the chapter with my fourth grade students by playing a game of "Jeopardy."

One of the categories in the game was "A Growing Region." I called on a student to pick a category and a money amount, to which he replied, "I'll take growing pains for $100."

Denise Rosenberry
Willow Hill, Pennsylvania

While teaching my sophomore world geography class, the discussion led to how some countries set quotas on certain imports and exports. Before proceeding, I felt it wise to ensure that everyone knew what a quota was. So I asked.

A young man in the second row raised his hand.

"Okay John, what is a quota?"

His reply: "25 cents."

Harry Vernet
Youngwood, Pennsylvania

One morning last year, a youngster in my special needs class came in and told me that his grandmother was in the hospital. I expressed my concern and asked if he was going to visit her.

"My dad said that I can't visit her," he said, "because she is in the 'You-see-me.'"

Puzzled, I thought for a moment and then it dawned on me.

"Do you mean the ICU?"

He replied, "Oh, yeah, that's the one!"

Mary Ann Bonneau
Worcester, Massachusetts

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA *Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

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Health Resources

New Partnership for Older Women's Health

Women today can expect to live as much as one-third of their lives beyond menopause—the milestone that marks the end of their reproductive years. The changes that occur in a woman's body after menopause can increase the risk of getting some diseases, and other diseases just occur more often in older women. Learn more about menopause and other important women's health issues from the Partnership for Post-Menopausal Women's Health.

www.womensorganizations.org

Problems with the air in your school?

The NEA Health Information Network supports the use of EPA's Tools for Schools Action Kit to prevent and manage indoor air quality problems. Cost: $25. To order please call 202/512-1800. Order # 055-000-00563-0.

Instructional Aids

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ROSEBUDS

Project ROSEBUDS

Project ROSEBUDS is a new service learning organization offering two innovative programs to NEA teachers and their classrooms: **Cancer Rose of Hope** and **Salute to Hospitalized Veterans**.

Both programs offer a teachers kit including: a classroom lesson plan, materials for creating silk rose or ribbon pins, and a written language activity allowing students to write messages of hope. Both kits come with suggestions for offering the assembled pins and messages of hope to local cancer or veterans' organizations and will be ready in time for Valentine's Day 2001.

For more information, contact **Project ROSEBUDS** at USAROSEBUDS@chicago.avenew.com
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With the NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan, you get up to $250,000 of fixed-rate term life insurance protection and your premiums will remain the same until you reach age 70. For more information, call 800/637-4636, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

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Name

Address

City | State | Zip

Home Phone ( ) | Business Phone ( )

Social Security Number | Date of Birth

Mother's Maiden Name (For identification only)

About your finances

Employer | Position

Years There | Annual Salary $

Other Income§ | Source $

§Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis for repayment.

Residence: ❑ Own ❑ Buying ❑ Rent ❑ Other

Monthly Payment $

Request for additional card

Name of Authorized User | Relationship

*I have read this application and everything I have stated in it is true. My signature means that I agree to the conditions described below and will be bound by each of the terms of the Credit Card Agreement, including Arbitration. MBNA America Bank, N.A. (MBNA) is authorized to check my credit, employment history or any other information and to report to others such information and credit experience with me. If I do not qualify for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, I will automatically be considered for the NEA School Days account. I understand that the acceptance or use of any card issued will be subject to the terms of this application and the Credit Card Agreement that will be sent with the card, and agree to be responsible for all charges incurred according to such terms. I am at least 18 years of age. By signing this application, I certify that I am an NEA member or part of an NEA member's family in good standing with the National Education Association. I consent to and authorize MBNA America Bank, N.A. and MBNA's affiliates to monitor and/or record my telephone conversations with their representatives or the representatives of any of those companies. I accept that MBNA may, at its discretion, periodically consider any account for an automatic upgrade. **Information about me or my account may be shared among MBNA Corp. and its subsidiaries for marketing or administrative purposes. I may prohibit such sharing of information, other than information pertaining solely to transactions or experiences between me and MBNA (or its subsidiaries), by writing to MBNA at P.O. Box 15342, Wilmington, DE 19850 and including my name, address, home phone number and the applicable MBNA account number(s).**

X *Signature | Date

†††Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	NEA *Platinum Plus* account: 15.99% for purchases; NEA School Days account: 16.99% for purchases.
Annual Fee	None.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	At least 25 days from statement closing date.
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average daily balance (including new transactions).
Transaction Fee for Purchases	Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase; $2 minimum, $10 maximum.
Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers: 1% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $25. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $25.

ΔEligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

††The current promotional APR offer for cash advance checks and balance transfers made with either account is 2.9% through your first four statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is open. Thereafter, the APR that will be applied to those new and outstanding cash advance check and balance transfer transactions will be 15.99% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account or 16.99% for the NEA School Days account. Cash advances and balance transfers may not be used to pay down or pay off any MBNA® issued account. **MBNA may allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs. Cash advances obtained through a Bank or ATM transaction are not eligible for the promotional 2.9% APR offer.**

†††A "fixed" Annual Percentage Rate (APR) means that the APR will not vary in accordance with changes in a formula, such as the U.S. Prime Rate. MBNA reserves the right to change the APR, in accordance with the Credit Card Agreement and the laws of the State of Delaware and the Federal Truth in Lending Act.

*Certain restrictions apply to these and other benefits described in the benefits brochure which is sent soon after your account is opened. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, e.g., year-end summary of charges is available upon request; MasterPurchase Protection is not available and maximum Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance coverage is up to $500,000; Credit lines run from $500 to $5,000, while *Platinum Plus* credit lines are from $5,500 to $100,000.

‡‡Respond to this offer by December 1, 2000. Use your new NEA *Platinum Plus* or NEA School Days MasterCard Credit Card by January 5, 2001 to make your first purchase, cash advance, or balance transfer transaction and approximately 6-8 weeks later you will receive a check for $25, made payable to the Federal Reserve, Pittsburgh Branch, together with a savings bond order form that you will need to fill out. Mail the check and the form to the address indicated and the $50 U.S. Savings Bond will be sent to you, by return mail, from the Federal Reserve, Pittsburgh Branch. MBNA America Bank, N.A., the sponsor of this limited-time offer, is not acting as agent for either the Federal Reserve or its Pittsburgh Branch. Limit one bond per person, new account, address, or household.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

MBNA America Bank, N.A. is the exclusive issuer and administrator of the *Platinum Plus* credit card program.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and their family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The information about the costs of the cards described in this application was accurate as of 8/00. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, call MBNA at (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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Mail your signed application to: NEA Credit Card Program; c/o MBNA America Bank, N.A.; P.O. Box 981054; El Paso, TX 79998-9937

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